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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["HE HAS SUCH A TRUE FACE," SAID QUEENIE, THOUGHTFULLY. "I SHOULD HAVE LIKED TO KNOW HIM."]

## KENNETH'S CHOICE.

### CHAPTER VII.

It was July! Bright, lovely weather; to the full as sunshiny as that summer day so many years ago, when poor Margaret St. Clune went to hide herself and her child, under an assumed name, in a far eastern suburb. It was just the kind of day when one feels glad to be alive; when for a brief space one forgets the load of sorrow and care that may be ours, and remembers only that the world is beautiful, and it is good to be in it.

But Austin Brooks had other causes for rejoicing than these, as the train bore him swiftly to Mardon. He had left the sea for good and all, and would settle down in his rightful place as his father's heir, free to bring home a wife to reign as mistress of the great house of which one ex-tradesman was justly proud.

Austin had never cared for the sea. He chose it as a career in a burst of boyish grief for the loss of his mother, when it seemed to him he could not get far enough away from all

that reminded him of her and recalled his grief. There was good stuff in the young fellow. When he found out his mistake, and that he should never really love the career he had chosen, he did his best manfully to be contented with things as they were, and did his duty so bravely that at eight-and-twenty he was first officer on board the Royal mail steamer *Egyptian*, with goodly chance of some day becoming her captain.

But old Samuel Brooks loved his first-born better than any other of his other children, and the prospect he offered him on land was more alluring than the chance of commanding even such a vessel as the *Egyptian*. Mr. Brooks was willing to resign to Austin the entire management of his estate, and to settle on him eight hundred a year.

"I don't believe, my boy!" said the old man, kindly, "you and I should ever quarrel, but we may as well have things put ship-shape." And so just after parting from his beautiful fiancée, Austin and his father went to London, and a deed was executed, which entailed the Manor House on Austin and his heirs for ever; while a tidy sum was invested

in his name, sufficient to bring in the income referred to.

"I don't say I won't do more for you some day!" explained his father; "but I mustn't forget the others. Eight hundred a year will keep you at Mardon like a gentleman. Most likely the other boys will want a start in life, and your sisters mustn't go empty-handed when they marry. I'm not so rich as I was last year, Austin—a bank failure did a deal of harm; but still I can hold my own pretty well; and when you come home I shall be able to leave things to you."

Never a more generous lover than Austin Brooks; but, poor fellow! seeing the little cottage in which his darling lived, knowing her mother's poverty, it never entered into his head that Queenie should expect more than he had to offer; that his beautiful penniless fiancée had set her mind not on a quiet country life, with plenty for every want and to spare, but on a gay, butterfly existence, with jewels and laces, balls and operas, parties and theatres to amuse her. Such an existence would have been hateful to the young man, who did not care for society and detested show; but he



had no idea of Queenie's ambition. He thought to be mistress of the Manor House would be quite satisfactory to her.

He seemed to trail on air. He would speak to his father to-morrow. No! that very night, and then he could see Mrs. Marsh in the morning. He hoped she would not insist on a long engagement. Why could they not be married in September, and then Queenie would be at home to cheer them in the long winter evenings, which to a town-bred family seem so dreary in the country!

Mr. Brooks's two daughters and the pony carriage met Austin, and conducted him home in triumph. Then he had to hear how the girls had been staying in London with their aunt, and the result was a double wedding, to take place in October.

"So, Austin!" said the elder of the brides-elect, smiling, "you really must find a wife soon, for Mopsy is only fifteen, and she could not keep house to save her life."

Mopsy was the youngest of the family, and a cripple. No wonder old Mr. Brooks endorsed his daughter's advice. With the marriage of both her sisters poor Mopsy would be left quite without feminine companionship.

"Look you here, Austin!" he cried, good temperedly, "as that she has a pretty face and nice ways of her own, I'm not likely to say you nay, whoever you choose."

"It's my belief," said Kitty, archly, "he's chosen already. He looks as red as possible!"

Later on that evening, when the father was taking his son to see some recent improvement in the gardens, he faced round on him suddenly with a question:

"Kitty's a sharp girl, Austin, and seldom in the wrong. Did she make a right hit this evening, when she said you had a Mrs. Austin in your mind?"

"There's only one girl I shall ever want to marry, sir," said his son, simply. "I wanted to talk to you about it to-night!"

"Talk away, lad. So that she's straight and strong, comes of a respectable stock, and has a pretty face of her own, I'm not likely to disapprove."

"You don't mind her being poor?"

Mr. Brooks shook his head.

"To tell you a secret, my boy, I'm rather sickened by great matches. There's Kitty and Millie going to be great ladies, or they think so, because one young man's got a cousin a baronet, and the other's mother's an honourable. Well, they may be fond of the girls and all that, but they've a pretty sharp eye to the main chance as well, and Kitty and her sister turn the house topsy turvy when they're coming, lest things shouldn't be good enough for them. No, no, my boy; I'd rather you married a pleasant, modest girl, who wouldn't turn up her nose at our homely ways."

"It's Miss Marsh, father. You must have seen her in church!"

"Miss Marsh!" The old man stared at Austin. "She's a pretty child, and has a sweet face of her own. Rich and poor have a good word for her. I went myself with the girls to see if we couldn't do anything for her when her sister went away, and I was uncommonly struck with her. She's a lady born and bred, and yet she's not ashamed of being poor. I don't know if you hunted the world over you could have found a wife to please me better!"

"I am delighted to hear it, father. But why has her sister gone away? I should not have thought Mrs. Marsh would have parted with either of the girls!"

"Bless my soul, Austin, haven't you heard? Didn't we tell you?"

"I have heard nothing of the Marshs since I left here with you the end of last April"—his voice shook. "You don't mean surely they're in trouble?"

Mr. Brooks blew his nose and tried to look hard hearted.

"It's no use fretting over anything that's past, Austin. It must be nearly three months ago now, for we are at the end of July, and I know it all happened directly I got back from London."

"What happened?" asked poor Austin, fairly out of patience.

"Mrs. Marsh died!"

The young man started.

"Died! What on earth has become of the girls?"

"It was awfully sudden—heart disease, I think. I'm not sure, though. She was ailing one evening, and the next morning she was dead!"

"And the girls?"

Oh, why had his father no pity for his suspense? What made him deal out his information so slowly?

"Some old lawyer came down from London and saw to the funeral and that. Then the sisters parted. One went to London to stay with her father's relations, the other kept on the cottage with that queer old servant they've had so long. I tell you, Austin, when I saw her face in church, looking so childish and sad, I made up my mind to go and see her. The girls didn't like the idea, but they had to give in. They owned afterwards they had never met a sweeter girl than Nelly Marsh."

"Nelly!" a shadow passed over Austin's face. "Yes, I know she must be a dear little thing, because Queenie loved her so; but I've only seen her once. It's the other sister I want to marry."

"The dark one?"

"Yes."

A little pause; the old man's disappointment was visible; a moment's struggle, and he put out his hand to his son.

"I promised you I'd not be hard to please, Austin, but I wish from all my heart it had been little Nell."

"Why?"

"Somehow she wins one's heart."

"Queenie is far more beautiful!"

"I suppose a peony is more beautiful than a daisy—but I like the daisy better."

"Birth, education, and connection are the same," said Austin. "If you would have been contented to call Nell your daughter, why should you object to Queenie?"

"I don't object, my boy—I'm disappointed. When you said you loved Miss Marsh I thought of no one but that pretty child. It's all my own fault."

"And you will love Queenie for my sake if—" he paused.

"Have you spoken to her?"

"She knows I meant to ask her to be my wife, and I don't think she will say nay. I must go and see her."

"Softly, lad. How are you to find her?"

"Nell will give me her address."

"I don't think she has it."

"She must. Those girls loved each other too well to quarrel, and what sister would go away without leaving her address? I shall go down to-morrow and see Nell."

"I'll go with you," agreed Mr. Brooks.

Austin would willingly have dispensed with his company, but the simple-minded old gentleman never thought it could be unwelcome; so very soon after breakfast the father and son strolled down the lane, and knocked at the cottage door.

Nell opened it herself. She had heard of Austin's return, and would willingly have avoided seeing him, but retreat was impossible now; and, after all, to poor Nell's honest heart it seemed the least she could do for Austin—if, indeed, Queenie meant to forsake him—to listen to his questions.

"Ah, Miss Nell!" began her elder visitor, "you see I've brought my son to see you?"

"Just in time, Mr. Brooks," said Nell, who felt quite at home with the kind old man, "for I am going away to-morrow."

"Going away?"

"Mr. Bailey has taken the cottage just as it is for his curate, so I have only to pack up."

"And where are you going? I hope you have not taken any situation where they'll make you work yourself to a shadow."

"Oh, no," Nell laughed. "I am going to

stay with some very old friends of mine. They have no daughter of their own, and years ago they wanted to adopt me. Mother couldn't spare me then, but now I am free to go."

"And your sister?"

Nell flushed crimson.

"I have never heard from Queenie since she left me. It is ten weeks, and I have never had a line."

"I am going to see her," said Austin, brightly, "and I will scold her for being such a bad correspondent. Shall I, Miss Nell?"

"You are going to see her? Then she has written to you; she did give you her address?"

Austin started.

"I never heard from her."

"She told me she meant to write to you. I asked her when she was going away if she had any message for you, and she said no—she would write."

"The letter must have miscarried!" said old Mr. Brooks, slowly. "It would be better for you to go and see the young lady, Austin, as soon as possible!"

His son looked at Nell.

"Will you give me her address?"

"I cannot!"

"I think I have a right to it!" said the young man, angrily; "you know I love her!" Poor Nell looked sorely tried.

"Mr. Brooks, I could not give you Margaret's address however much I wished it, for I do not know it."

"You don't know your own sister's address?"

It is monstrous! I don't believe it!"

"It is true," said the girl, with a simple neglect of all protestations, which told one of her listeners, at least, she was not deceiving him. "When my mother died Queenie had an invitation to go and live with her grandmother. She had been offended, I think, at her son's marriage, but she was willing to take charge of Queenie."

"And you?"

"Oh, no! They knew I was not afraid of having to work for my living. Queenie accepted the invitation at once, and the very day after her mother's funeral she went up to London, where her grandmother was to meet her and take her home. She promised me to write often, but I have never heard from her. She was always proud," said Nell, simply; "perhaps now she is richer she wants to forget she ever lived in a poor little cottage like this!"

"I don't believe it!" said Austin, defiantly.

"You are angry with her because she has fared better than yourself!"

Nell sighed.

"I don't think I could be angry with Queenie. We have been inseparable all our lives, and losing her was like losing a part of myself. Indeed, indeed I am not trying to blame her! Perhaps her grandmother has forbidden her to keep up old associations; perhaps she thinks it might only make me more discontented. I can't tell you her reasons. I only know she went away ten weeks ago, and I have heard nothing of her since."

"And you have no idea where she lives?"

"I know it was to be in the country, and I believe her grandmother was well off. Mr. Brooks, I would help you if I could!"

"I shall find her," said Austin, determinedly. "No grandmother shall hide her from me if I seek her for years; if I hunt every village in England through I will not give up my search. I love her, and I will find her."

Father and son took their leave, and Nell sank back in a low chair with clasped hands, the tears running down her cheeks.

"How he loves her, and she promised to marry him! She professed to love him just as he did her, and now she has forsaken him just because she is richer. Oh, how could she do it! how could she! I think if anyone loved me like that I should be ready to give my life for him. I don't think love brings happiness," she went on, dreamingly speaking aloud,



almost unconsciously. "If we have it we don't value it; if we are without it we worry for it; yet I suppose everyone loves once in life. I wonder if I ever shall?"

"Not if you are wise, Miss Nell," said Sally, who entered to lay the cloth for dinner. "It says in the Bible money is the root of all evil, but I am sure it ought to be love; it brings a sight more trouble than money."

"Sally!"

"It is quite true, Miss Nell. I read in a comic paper once love was like orange marmalade—a delicious mixture of sweet and bitter; if so, Miss Nell, it ain't meted fair; and some folks get a deal more sweet than's right, and leave nothing but bitter for the others! I reckon young Mr. Brooks would say so."

"You saw him, then?"

"I did; and a fine-looking young fellow he is—but he'll never get Miss Queenie!"

"He loves her!"

"With her face there's plenty more'll do that, and it'll take more than love to satisfy Miss Queenie."

"I wish——"

"Don't begin wishing, Miss Nell," interrupted Sally. "or you'll never trace the end of it. I wish you weren't going to-morrow. The new curate may be an angel in black broad-cloth, but he'll never be like you!"

Nell smiled, and put her little white hand into the woman's brown one.

"You have been very good to us, Sally!"

"Good! It's not the word to use to me, Miss Nell. Your mother was good, if you like, and I shall never forget it—never while I live!"

"You must come and see me in London, Sally. You know you used to like Mrs. Ainslie!"

"I'll come," said Sally, shortly. "Miss Nell," she went on, seriously, "I want to tell you something. Never let yourself be put upon. If you had your rights you're quite as good as Miss Queenie or anyone else; and maybe you'll have your rights some day!"

"I don't want to be a great lady like Queenie," said Nell, who knew Sally had overheard Mr. Ashwin's conversation, and so knew all about Queenie's prospects. "I don't think fate ever made me for one!"

"I reckon fate did!" said Sally, quietly. "Miss Nell, are you quite sure you think you'll be happy with the Ainslies?"

"Quite."

"And you would rather go there than live with Miss Queenie in her grandeur?"

"Far rather."

"I suppose you mean it, Miss Nell?"

"Of course I mean it! How strange you are, Sally! I love Mrs. Ainslie dearly!"

"And she's a good sort. I reckon I'll let things be, Miss Nell, after all."

Nell was so used to Sally's peculiarities that this remarkable speech failed to make her curious. She was a little surprised that the woman whose devotion had been all poured out on Queenie should now transfer her affections to herself; but she explained it by remembering, if gratitude to Mrs. Marsh were the moving spring of the poor servant's love, it was natural her benefactress's child should be more to her than a stranger's.

She had, as a little girl, felt a strange uneasiness almost amounting to fear when left alone with Sally. Even now, at times, the old feeling returned, and she would sometimes think the troubles of long ago had a little affected Sally's brain. She was so apt to excite herself causelessly, so quick to take offence, and so fond of talking to herself, that Nell's private opinion was she was a little "touched." But on this July day she had put aside all such thoughts. Sally seemed to her the last relic of her childhood's home; the last link with the happy past; and she felt a real regret she and the eccentric servant must go different ways!

"Miss Nell," said Sally, coming into the parlour late in the evening when the little lamp had been lighted for the last time, "I've

brought my cards, and I'd like to tell your fortune before you go."

"Why, you don't believe in such nonsense, do you, Sally?"

"Indeed I do, Miss Nell. It was but two nights before your mother—the heavens be her bed!—went away that I was cutting the cards alone in the kitchen—and what did they say? Parting! sorrow! death! I'd like to know whether you call that nonsense, Miss Nell? There's no telling when I shall see you again, and you'll not be vexing Sally the last night she's got to be with you?"

Nell relented. She took the cards, cut them as directed into three packs, and was then enjoined to wish.

"Wish for whatever you fancy, child, but don't say it out loud," said Sally, "or tell any one."

Nell obeyed the first injunction implicitly; as for the other, she never told her wish till years after, and then the telling could break no spell, since the wish itself had been long granted.

She was not superstitious, but Sally had impressed her in spite of herself. There was a deeper colour in her cheeks, a brighter light in her eyes as she said,—

"I am ready."

Sally went to work in a most business-like manner, but the cards seemed to trouble her. The queen of spades, in special, had a knack of turning up in places where, to Sally's mind, her majesty had no manner of right to be. At last the servant pushed the cards together in a heap, and began to cry.

"What's the matter, Sally?" asked Nell, quickly; "you can't be unhappy just because of a few cards?"

"I am, Miss Nell. It's me as asked you to try your fate, and I wish I hadn't."

"Is it so bad?"

"Bad enough."

"You had better tell me all about it, Sally. You know you're longing to, and, as I am not superstitious, it won't frighten me."

"Are you sure, Miss Nell?"

"Quite."

"Then I think I'll tell you—maybe it'll be a warning to you. The fact is, Miss Nell, you've got an enemy."

"People always have, according to fortune-tellers," remarked Nell, with great serenity.

"An enemy that would not stop at anything just to hinder that wish of yours."

Nell looked up quickly.

"Do I get my wish?"

"You get it right enough; but, oh! Miss Nell, the troubles it brings you! From the moment you have your wish the dark lady's angry, and she brings down on you every misery she can think of. There's parting, poverty, anger, ay, and disgrace. She calls them all down on you in a heap, and even then she's not content."

"But I get my wish?" persisted Nell.

"You get it right enough, but, to my mind, you'd better be without it than go through so much misery for it."

The gift that Nell had wished for with all the romantic yearning of her nineteen years was love.

The morning came, everything was packed, and Nell was ready to depart in the solitary fly of Mardon, which had come to take her and her possessions to the station, when Sally, with big red eyes and indistinct voice, came for a last good-bye.

"I'll ask you but one favour, Miss Nell. If the trouble comes from the dark lady will you let me know?"

Nell smiled. In the glad morning sunshine she had no gloomy fears. Superstition was to Sally part of her nature; but it could never take a real hold on such a pure, innocent heart as Nell's.

"Why, Sally! Do you think you possess any special spell which would disarm her wrath, and save me the multitude of troubles you predicted I should suffer at her hands?"

She was hardly prepared for the reply.

"Yes, Miss Nell, I have."

It was so fierce and dauntless it impressed Nell in spite of herself, and as she took Sally's hand she did what she had never done since the days of her childhood—she kissed the olive cheek.

"God bless you, Sally, and make other people as good to you as you have been to us!"

"Good to me!" exclaimed Sally, when the fly fairly out of sight she retired to the kitchen to have a good cry, as a relief to her feelings. "Good to her! I wonder what she'd say if she knew all. And yet I never wanted to hurt Miss Nell, only I couldn't go against the other one—at least, not yet. She shan't spoil Miss Nell's life; I'll see to that; but as to riches and fortune, when girls have got a mind like Miss Nell's, it's little they care for such things. Love and a four roomed cottage 'ld make her happy. Well, I have thought when Mrs. Marsh saved my life, and I swore to do my best for her and her children what that best 'ld be. And now I'll dry my eyes and have a good turn-out. There's nothing like a thorough cleaning for making folks forget their troubles, and as the Ainslies 'll take care of Miss Nell I need not worry about her yet."

In truth the Ainslies were very glad to "take care of" Nell. Bruce Carew had found out long before his sister returned that it was not only in face she resembled his lost love of other days. He was proud of her beauty, and declared that with cultivation her talents as an artist would make her quite independent.

"She won't need to be independent," said Marion Ainslie. "The moment we heard of Mrs. Marsh's death we resolved Nell should be our daughter. So Hugh has let me write to her, and you must love her as a niece."

The artist looked thoughtful.

"I suppose you two have quite made up your minds?"

"Marion has hankered after the girl for years," said Hugh Ainslie. "And I think, Bruce, we are rich enough to afford the luxury of an adopted child."

"But Miss Marsh is not a child!"

"Little more."

"I don't like adoptions!"

"Why not?" demanded his sister.

"No," put in her husband. "Spare us a lecture on the dangers of adoptions in general, and tell us what particular evil you fear from Nell being our child?"

"You might get tired of her!"

"I don't think that's likely. Besides, I fancy she is the sort of girl to marry."

"And I think there is a secret in her history. She is a perfect lady granted; but you know nothing of her antecedents. And you are both so proud that if any shadow fell on the girl you had adopted you could ill bear it."

"There can be no secret in her past. It is perfectly clear. The mother was a most ladylike woman; but as none of her husband's family took any notice of her, she had probably been beneath him in rank. On her death the grandmother takes the eldest girl—who resembled her father—and the younger comes to us. I see nothing strange!"

"The grandmother takes no notice whatever of Nell. How do you explain that?"

Nell herself explained it the first time she saw Mrs. Ainslie!

"I cannot bear for you not to know Queenie was not my sister. Her mother left her in my mother's care, and we were brought up as sisters. But there is no relation at all between us, so that it is not at all strange Queenie's grandmother has taken no notice of me."

"There," said Mrs. Ainslie to her brother, "I hope you are satisfied now?"

"I was always satisfied Miss Marsh was the sweetest girl I ever knew, but I still think it would be wiser not to adopt her. Invite her on a long visit engage her as your companion only. Why call her your daughter and give her your name?"

But the Ainslies were unpersuadable. And so Nell was introduced to servants, friends, and acquaintances as their adopted daughter. Marion was never weary of listening to her singing, and choosing delicate mourning dresses to set off the fair girlish face. And when the family from Oakley Cottage went down to Brighton for the autumn, the visitors' list chronicled the arrival of Mr., Mrs. and Miss Ainslie.

There had been no difficulty meanwhile, thus far, in carrying out the provisions of Lord Combermere's will. Mr. Ashwin had himself escorted Miss St. Clune to Whiteladies, and there the Countess had received her with the greatest kindness and affection.

"My dear!" she said, that first evening when they sat alone together, "a month ago I had never heard of you, but it was my husband's dying wish that you should come to Combermere and live at the grand old abbey where your father was born, and I need not tell you I will do my utmost to make you happy. You must naturally feel the loss of your kind foster-mother, but I hope you will try to love me a little."

"Indeed, it will not be difficult," said Queenie, gracefully; "but oh! how strange it seems to call you grandmamma!"

The Countess smiled.

"I was your grandfather's third wife, and many years his junior!"

"And had you no children?"

"None! You and your cousin Kenneth are the last of the St. Clunes."

"He is Lord Combermere. Does he live at the abbey all by himself, or is he married?"

"He is Lord Combermere, but he does not live at the abbey. It is shut up for the present. Kenneth lives alone in London."

"I am so sorry!"

"Why?"

"He has such a true face," said Queenie, thoughtfully, "I should have liked to know him."

"I hope he will often come to see us. Kenneth is a great favourite of mine, Margaret!"

She did not know that, ardently as she desired her grandchild's marriage with Lord Combermere, her wishes on the subject were weak compared to Margaret's own. From the instant she heard that he was the last of the St. Clunes the young lady had set her mind on one design—that of being his Countess.

"I wish you had brought Miss Marsh with you!" said the grandmother, kindly. "It would have made it so much more cheerful for you; and, poor girl, I don't like to think of her being all alone."

"Nell has plenty of friends, and—I would rather you should know it—she was very unkind about my coming here."

"Perhaps she shrank from the parting?"

"It was not that. Nell has been spoilt; everyone gave in to her in her mother's lifetime, and I think she was put out that I should turn out to be a grand lady and she remain nobody."

Lady Combermere was quite prepared to adopt most of her grandchild's views, but she could not admire this speech.

"My dear Margaret," she said, frankly, "don't be harsh. Poor child! after seeing you treated as her sister all these years on a perfect equality in all things, I can understand she did feel it very hard there should suddenly be such a difference between you. I can't help wishing she had come here. I would have tried to comfort her for her mother's loss, and to show her that even if you are not her sister, we can never forget the years you shared her home."

Queenie registered a mental resolution to keep Nell and Lady Combermere rigidly apart. They would understand and like each other far too well for her piece of mind, she thought.

The Countess persisted.

"And what are her plans, dear?"

"She is going to live with some people who lodged at our house once, and took a fancy to her. They have kept up a correspondence ever since."

"I hope they will be good to her."

"Oh, yes! They have no children, and are getting elderly. The wife will like someone a little better than a servant to go about with her; and her husband, who smokes eternally, will be glad to have a pretty girl (Nell is pretty in a certain style) to light his pipes for him. They have plenty of money to live in a quiet way, somewhere beyond Brompton; and as their tastes exactly suit Nell, she is sure to be happy."

Every word of this speech was true, and yet it conveyed—as it was intended it should—a totally wrong impression to Lady Combermere. She imagined from it Miss Marsh was a pretty flighty damsel, rather inclined to be fast, and that her friends (whose name had not been told her) were vulgar, well-meaning people, who had probably kept a small shop before their present prosperity. Certainly, if such thing things suited Miss Marsh, it was just as well she should not come to Whiteladies, where she would have felt quite out of her element.

"Birth always tells," said the Countess, a little proudly. "Now, I suppose you had no more advantages of education or society than your foster-sister? Yet think of the difference between you!"

"We were always thought a great contrast," admitted Miss St. Clune. "But Nell is a good little thing in her way, grandmamma; and, as you say, perhaps it was natural she should feel a little jealous, so I think I will write to her and tell her how kind you are to me. For her mother's sake I should not like Nell to think me unkind—for I never can forget Mrs. Marsh!"

Some tears were in her eyes—tears of real feeling, too, for in this, at least, she was true—she had loved Mrs. Marsh very much. Lady Combermere kissed her.

"Write by all means, my dear; and tell your friend if she is lonely or unhappy at any time I have always a home and a welcome for her at Whiteladies."

The letter was written and submitted to the Countess, who pronounced it perfect.

"She must see from this that prosperity has not changed you, and that you love her just the same!"

"I will post it myself to-morrow, somehow. I shall feel sure of its reaching Nell if I put it into the box with my own hands, grandmamma."

But neither with her own hands nor any other's was that letter posted to poor little Nell. And as the days wore on, and Margaret began to remark upon the silence, and wonder she did not write, poor Lady Combermere was bound to confess to herself after all her grandchild had not judged Miss Marsh harshly after all, but she really was so jealous and envious by nature she could not forgive her foster-sister the being a greater favourite with Fortune than herself.

Very early in her stay at Whiteladies the heiress was taken to the Abbey, to see the old house which had been the birthplace of her race. As the Countess and her grandchild passed down the picture-gallery she observed, regretfully, "I wish you were more like your father, Margaret! See, this is his portrait! You have his dark hair, but in all else you take after your mother, I suppose?"

Queenie looked long and anxious at the features of Noel St. Clune, then she turned away with a sigh.

"He must have loved my mother very much to give up such a home as this for her sake! Grandmamma, why doesn't Lord Combermere live here?"

It was an abrupt question, and the Countess was taken aback.

"He has many things to keep him in London"—and she hoped the subject would be dropped.

But Miss St. Clune had no mind to drop it. Her next question was yet more embarrassing.

"He is the master of the Abbey, isn't he?"

(To be continued.)

## "I'M CAUGHT, I'M CAUGHT."

—O—

CUPID was sporting by a brook;  
He bent a pin and made a hook,  
Then called for all the fishes dear:  
But not a single fish came near.

A robin in a tree-top high,  
Was winking at him very aly,  
He saw the maiden of the mill  
Come tripping down the meadow hill.

Then Cupid yawned, an arrow took,  
And shot it in the little brook;  
And said: "I think I'll run away,  
And come again some other day."

The robin high up in the tree,  
Still warbled forth his song of glee;  
And still the maiden of the mill  
Came tripping down the meadow hill.

Then down she sat beside the brook,  
Close, close, by canning Cupid's hook.  
"Oh what a pretty world," she thought;  
Then starting shrieks: "I'm caught, I'm caught!"

Sly Cupid sees, and cries in glee:  
"There's one at least that's caught by me.  
Ah! love will bait 'most any hook,  
And fishes swim in every brook."

L. L.

## THE GOLDEN HOPE.

—O—

### CHAPTER IX.—(continued.)

LADY REDWOODS smiled faintly, and, regarding her smile as a token of encouragement to proceed, the lawyer continued,—

"One of these young ladies has Hindoo blood, and is the granddaughter of the old ayah. That one is Miss Hellice. Her dark complexion, her hard, changeful eyes, and the deep hue of the colour in her cheeks, are all due to her Hindoo ancestry, and prove beyond all manner of doubt her parentage. Mr. Glintwick, begging your pardon, Lady Redwoods, was not half so cunning as he thought himself. He fancied he sent us a tangled skein, but at the first touch we have found a clue which unravels the whole mystery. He must have been blind not to have seen that the appearance of these young ladies would betray their identity!"

"Horatio was very wily," said her ladyship, musingly.

"But he could not change nature," exclaimed Mr. Kenneth, quickly. "He hoped to confuse and bewilder your good judgment, but he has signally failed."

"Yes, he has failed!" said the Baroness, with a joyful inspiration, her fair sweet face suddenly glowing. "I have no doubts of the justice of my choice, Mr. Kenneth—but a strange fear, a horrible misgiving came over me last night, and I have not been myself since. I was too happy to sleep, and an unpleasant fancy came over me that my bliss was nothing but a dream. I yearned to look upon my daughter's face as she lay in her innocent slumbers, and I stole to her bed-chamber. She lay on her pillow, flushed with sleep, looking like an angel, as she is. I bent over her and kissed her softly and called her sweet names, for my heart was very full. I called her my child, my daughter, and as I spoke those sweet and holy names I heard, or thought I heard, a mocking laugh almost in my ear. I started and looked around, but saw no one except the ayah, who was standing at a little distance like a marble statue, her countenance void of all expression. I demanded if she had laughed, and she answered by a stare of surprise, and by declaring that I must have deceived myself, for no one had laughed. It was then that



that strange fear and horrible misgiving came over me, my friend. My disordered fancy suggested that it was my brother's spirit exulting over me, and the fear came that I might after all have deceived myself. I knew better, even while I feared so, for Cecile is mine—my own—and yet, that laugh—

"That laugh was the offspring of your disordered fancy, dear Lady Redwoode," said the old man, earnestly. "Yesterday you were in a state of supreme exaltation. I noticed that you ate scarcely anything in your joyful excitement. You were sleepless at night, and your excitement had not abated. Now, my wonder is, not that you heard a mocking laugh, but that you did not see your brother *in propria persona*, attended by a legion of laughing demons. Your experience was extremely moderate!" and his eyes twinkled humorously.

"Then you attach no importance to it?"

"None whatever, except to regard it as a hint to return to your regular habits of eating, drinking, and sleeping."

The Baroness looked relieved, and certainly breathed more freely.

"These things look so different when viewed with the eyes of sober common sense," she said, with a sigh of satisfaction. "You have lifted a load from my heart, my friend. And now I want you to tell me what you think of these young strangers."

"They are very beautiful, madam—"

"Yes, I know, Mr. Kenneth, and I shall not be offended if you tell me that the beauty of Hellice far transcends that of Cecile. I know it myself—tell me what you think of my daughter."

"What can I think of her other than that she is good and beautiful as an angel?" said her ladyship's counsellor, enthusiastically. "She is gentle and loving, and looks like an innocent child, to be petted, guarded, and loved. The servants already are loud in her praise, and declare her to be your very image and counterpart."

Lady Redwoode's eyes lighted up with pleasure.

"They are right," she said. "Cecile looks like me, and in mind she is all you have described her. She has a tender, clinging nature, rarely to be found in a grown-up maiden. Yet she has a generous soul and would not willingly complain even to me of the wrongs and sorrows she has endured at her late uncle's hands. She said enough, however, in her artless way, to convince me that her uncle treated her very harshly at times and that her cousin exhibited an insolent and overbearing disposition towards her. It was in a hard school, Mr. Kenneth, that my sweet Cecile developed her saint-like nature. But," she added, "I have no wish to prejudice you against Hellice. Tell me what you think of her."

Very innocently and unintentionally, but just as effectually as if she had designed it, Lady Redwoode had prejudiced her faithful friend against her orphan niece.

Mr. Kenneth had thought Hellice "a rare and radiant maiden," with a soul as pure as her glorious loveliness, and a nature as sweet and generous as an angel's. He had had a brief conversation with Hellice that morning, as has been said, and the young girl's graciousness of manner, not devoid of pride and hauteur, had enraptured him, and caused him to wish in his own heart that nature had made her the daughter of the Baroness, in Cecile's stead.

But the statement that she had been supercilious and overbearing to the wronged child of Lady Redwoode now turned the current of his feelings, and he was almost angry with himself that he should have preferred her to her fairer cousin.

Yet, even in his chagrin, he could not be less than just.

"Miss Hellice is very beautiful," he said, with a sigh, "more beautiful in form and feature than Miss Cecile. I never in my life saw such a strangely radiant loveliness. She

may be gentle, but she is not meek. Once or twice already I have seen a stormy look in her eyes, and her lips have curled scornfully at some remark of her cousin's. I built up in my own mind quite a little romance about her this morning. I said to myself that she had a grand, spirited nature; a hatred of all falsehood or dissimulation; a scorn of all petty and ignoble weaknesses; and an ardent love of truthfulness, honour, and goodness. She seemed so to me. Alas, that it was all seeming!"

"You think, then, that she is not what she appears?"

"I think she is not, Lady Redwoode," said Mr. Kenneth, slowly, loth to declare in words his recent and sudden convictions. "With her Hindoo blood, she has doubtless something of the Hindoo nature. She is, perhaps, false to the core of her heart. She may be, doubtless is, wily and unscrupulous, as well as versed in duplicity. Why she acceded so readily to your acknowledgment of Miss Cecile I do not quite understand. It seems to me she would have made an effort to take her cousin's place. Probably, however, she knew the truth and doubted her ability to act a false part. She probably comprehended that her personal appearance would betray her identity. But she must have plans, hopes, and schemes. What can they be?"

"I am sure I cannot even imagine," replied Lady Redwoode, thoughtfully. "She visited me only a few moments before your coming, and exhibited a disposition full of tenderness and love. She seemed to yearn for affection, and I felt tempted to take her in my arms and give her a mother's caresses."

"I see her aim!" said Mr. Kenneth, abruptly. "She wishes to entwine herself around your heart and secure an equal place with Miss Cecile. I have only to say, dear madam—beware of her!"

"I don't know what to think!" exclaimed the Baroness, with a passionate quiver in her tones. "My reason urges me to act upon your advice, but there is a strange feeling at my heart which I do not understand, and which I cannot overcome, which warns me to treat her tenderly. I suppose the tie of blood between us, slight as it is, makes itself felt to me. I can explain this feeling in no other way."

"I daresay she does not deserve your consideration and pity!"

"When I summoned you here, my friend," said Lady Redwoode, "it was with the intention of consulting you with reference to making my niece co-heiress with my daughter. My mind must seem variable to you, I know. I do not understand myself—"

She paused, and Mr. Kenneth seized the opportunity to combat strongly the idea of making the two young ladies co-heiresses. He declared that such a step would cruelly wrong Miss Avon, and would be a premium upon Miss Glintwick's duplicity. He said that it would be almost wicked to divide so grand a property as Redwoode or so magnificent a private fortune as that belonging to the baroness; and he urged that the tenantry, now enthusiastic in praise of the fair-haired maiden of whom most of them had caught glimpses, would grieve bitterly and even revolt against the fate that should place over them a mistress with Hindoo blood in her veins.

To these remarks Lady Redwoode listened thoughtfully, and, when he had concluded, she said:

"I did not intend to divide Redwoode, Mr. Kenneth. It was my private fortune to which I referred. Redwoode must be preserved intact. I will think over what you have said, and talk with Cecile about it. She may be able to say something that will determine my resolution, but be assured that I shall do nothing rashly."

Mr. Kenneth expressed his satisfaction at this resolve and repeated his injunction to beware of Hellice. Then a silence of brief duration occurred, the old man musing upon

the singular events transpiring at Redwoode, and the lady looking idly from the window equally absorbed in thought.

Suddenly her gaze rested upon Cecile and Andrew Forsythe, who were promenading in one of the garden walks. The young girl's hands were full of flowers, and a wreath of them had been entwined about her narrow-brimmed hat. The face that looked from under the flower-laden brim was all aglow with animation and sweetness. The insipidity that marked the fair blonde features in repose had vanished utterly. Cecile was looking up with an expression of artless innocence into Mr. Forsythe's face, and he was bending down to her with an assumption of tender interest, his form looking noble and manly in contrast with her slender figure.

"A handsome young couple," murmured the Baroness, almost unconsciously.

The old man's gaze followed her own and a look of pain crossed his face.

"I presume I understand your ladyship's meaning," he said, gravely. "But Mr. Forsythe would not be a fitting mate for a noble and lovely young girl, any more than he would be a fitting master for Redwoode."

"You are prejudiced against Andrew, my friend," said Lady Redwoode, smiling. "I have often told you that you misjudge him, since you will not give me any reason for your dislike."

"He is extravagant, and has frequently exacted sums of money from me which I have given him from my own property rather than that he should betray his folly to you. During his long visits to town he used much more than his allowance, and I have feared that he lost his money at the gaming-table."

"You are not sure, then?"

The lawyer replied in the negative.

"As to his extravagance," remarked the Baroness, "all young men have that fault in a greater or less degree. Andrew has been led to expect that he would inherit Redwoode, and that expectation may have made him more reckless of expenses. There are ways enough besides gaming to fritter away a handsome allowance, and I do not like to think ill of Andrew. Were he but married, Mr. Kenneth, he would throw aside his dissipated habits and become a staid, sober member of society. I have faith in him. I do not wish to rob him of a happy and prosperous future; and so, my friend, I will own that I shall be glad to see him the husband of my Cecile. In such an event I should feel that I was not wronging him and that I was securing my daughter's happiness."

Mr. Kenneth checked himself in the remonstrance he was about to utter, deferring his own judgment to that of the baroness. But his happy face became clouded and his manner abstracted. Evidently, he felt already a fatherly affection for Cecile, and was deeply pained at the thought of confiding her future to the care of the late Lord Redwoode's nephew.

Had he known Cecile better he would have spared himself all anxiety with regard to her, for she was supremely capable of managing her own destiny.

There was another brief conversation, and then Lady Redwoode changed her seat for one at a small inlaid writing-table of Japanese or Indian origin, and proceeded to dictate a friendly note to Sir Richard Houghton, informing him of the existence and restoration of her daughter, and requesting him to call as soon as convenient that he might witness her great happiness. The tiny gold pen flowed swiftly over the heavy white satin paper, tracing in delicate characters the story of her present joy, and every letter and every stroke bore evidence of her pleased excitement. The epistle finished, she enclosed it in an envelope and sealed it with snow-white wax, the only variation she as yet indulged in from black.

"I will send it over to Sea View by a prompt messenger," said Mr. Kenneth, with whom the young baronet was an especial

favourite, "if your ladyship will entrust it to my care."

The Baroness gave it into his keeping, and he withdrew, intent on his errand, while she returned to her sunny window-nook, and gazed dreamily out of the Indian lattice that was the counterpart of one in distant India, through which she had often gazed in company with the lover of her youth. Indeed, the furniture of her room and the style of its adorning were fashioned in accordance with the luxurious tastes of her first husband, who had a passionate love for all things gorgeous and oriental in their character, although himself a model of simplicity.

We will not attempt to analyze the lady's thoughts as she sat there. They were in a whirl of confusion from which she could not extricate them. Her reason echoed the warnings of good Mr. Kenneth, but her heart—that strange, inexplicable centre of the being—warmed towards Hellice, and she could not conquer its yearnings. She said to herself that she had misapprehended her strength of resentment against her deceased brother, and that the tie of kinship between herself and his orphan daughter was stronger than she could have believed. She assured herself that her pity for Hellice was misplaced, and yet she could not withdraw it.

"Granting that she is false and deceitful," she mused, "granting that she is only my niece, the daughter of my brother and his half-Indian wife, there yet comes through my mind the last word of Horatio: 'Beware, in choosing one, of wronging the other!' I know I have chosen rightly, and yet—and yet—"

If, as some enthusiasts believe quite possible the soul of Horatio Glintwick could have looked in upon his lovely widowed sister at that moment, and there remained in the immortal and freed spirit, how would he have exulted in the success of his last scheme, the latest machination which he had conceived and put into execution.

For, though morally convinced that Cecile was her own child, poor Lady Redwoode felt at times a want of confidence in her own judgment, and a horrible fear that she might have deceived herself in her choice. She had no doubt that Hellice was all that Cecil had declared her to be. She had no doubt but that Hellice was Renee's grand-daughter, and, as she had said, there was scarcely room for uncertainty; but yet—

A restless look appeared in her deep, azure eyes, and the rose blooms on her pale cheeks deepened, and she moved nervously as if to escape from her thoughts. She put away from her white forehead the heavy tresses of pale gold, and then clasped her hands tightly, and gave herself up to painful musings.

In the midst of her reverie she was interrupted by the return of Cecil, who came in gaily through the glazed door, alone, the incarnation of brightness and sunshine.

At sight of her a load seemed lifted from Lady Redwoode's heart. Her doubts were all dispelled, her fears overcome, and her soul became serenely tranquil.

"Come to me, love," she said, in a voice freighted with tenderness, holding out her hand. "I have missed you and have been feeling dull. I feel I shall become sadly dependant upon you, my daughter, for your presence frightens away all my misgivings."

Cecil gave a quick glance at the Baroness from under her yellow lashes, and hastened to her side with child-like impulsiveness.

"Misgivings, mamma!" she exclaimed. "Are you tired of me already? Do you prefer Hellice? Have you seen my cousin since I have been out?"

"Yes, love, I have seen Hellice since her return from her walk. She showed a very sweet side of her character, or a sweet seeming, but she has not altered my convictions in the least. I know you are mine, my love. Now tell me if you are pleased with Andrew."

"Very much, dear mamma. He is hand-

some and intelligent, and pays me so many compliments that I can't help liking him," replied Cecile, with an affection of artless innocence.

Lady Redwoode smiled and softly stroked the maiden's hair.

"I am glad you are pleased with him, my angel," she said, tenderly. "I think I could resign you to Andrew's care, all things considered, easier than to any other, unless that other were—"

"Whom, mamma?" asked Cecile, as the widow hesitated.

"A neighbour of mine, Sir Richard Haughton. But I ought not to have mentioned his name, for he is believed to be invulnerable to ladies' charms. And if he were not, I should still prefer Andrew, for I feel as though Andrew had a sort of claim upon Redwoode."

"This Sir Richard Haughton, mamma—is he young?"

"Yes, love, young and handsome, although his face is thought too grave and stern for one of his years. He will call here to-day, and you can decide for yourself upon his attractiveness. But remember that Andrew is to be your hero," and her ladyship smiled gravely. "By the way, my darling, you told me that you love your cousin, Hellice!"

"So I do, mamma," she replied wonderingly.

"I wish to talk with you about her. You know I acknowledged you yesterday as the heiress of Redwoode?"

Cecil replied in the affirmative.

"You also know, perhaps, that I inherited from my mother a handsome fortune. It is in relation to that fortune that I wish to speak. You must not think, my own child, that I doubt the holy and intimate relationship between you and me. I fear that you may deem me weak, but my brother's last words—the last of his letter—haunt me cruelly. I know that Hellice is only my niece, but, whatever her character, she is akin to you and to me, and I will provide for her. I have decided to declare Hellice my intended successor to my mother's fortune."

Cecil drooped her head and a bitter expression of disappointed avarice flitted over her face. Her eyes glittered strangely with an angry look, but when she lifted her countenance a moment later to Lady Redwoode's searching gaze she was calm and self-possessed, and even apparently pleased.

"How generous you are, my darling mother!" she exclaimed, with seeming admiration and enthusiasm. "You have anticipated what I would have asked had I possessed sufficient courage. I have forgiven Hellice all her cruelty to me, and I should like to testify my good feeling towards her by some sacrifice in her favour. Perhaps Hellice will love me now for your sake!"

She bestowed a kiss upon the widow's cheek, and then resumed her seat and her enthusiastic comments upon Lady Redwoode's intended generosity.

The effect of her remarks, as she expected, was to shake the Baroness's new-formed resolution, but the latter did not permit her indecision to become apparent. She listened quietly to Cecile, her convictions of Hellice's unworthiness increasing with every word, and her love and confidence in the former strengthening in a corresponding ratio.

"I supposed I ought to make my will," she said, wearily, after a long period of abstraction. "But there is time enough," she added, with an attempt at gaiety. "I do not like to think of gloomy things during the first days and weeks of your coming home."

"You look tired, mamma," said Cecile, with tender sympathy. "I am distressing you with my reminiscences of Indian life under my task-mistress Hellice. Lie down and try to sleep, while I run upstairs for a siesta. I miss my morning after-breakfast sleep more than you can guess."

She made a luxurious couch of the pillows on the divan, let fall the curtains that made

the window-nook an enclosed recess, and softly stole away, closing the door noiselessly behind her in her retreat.

It was singular that when left alone Lady Redwoode's thoughts reverted to that soft shower of kisses which Hellice had that morning rained upon her bowed head rather than to the caresses of which Cecile was so liberal.

It was singular that the dark and delicate loveliness of Hellice was prominent in her mind above the fairer beauty of the maiden she had claimed as her daughter, and that the sweet, ringing, flute-like tones of the former seemed to drown completely the memory of the weaker, less soulful voice of the latter.

Yet such was the truth, and the widowed Baroness hated herself for it.

While she was thus absorbed in sorrowful reveries Cecile ran through the wide halls, up the statue-niched staircase, to her own apartments.

Entering her boudoir, which was deserted, she flung herself upon a couch beside the window, and gave herself up to anger, actually sobbing with rage.

"It is not for the paltry money that I grieve," she said, in a whisper, "though it is bad enough to lose a single guinea of her possessions, but that she should even seem to doubt that I am her child—that she should wish to enrich that hateful Hellice—that she should even think kindly of her—it is that that stings me. I cannot endure it. I will not submit to it!"

With a quick, impetuous movement, at variance with the indolent repose natural to her character, Cecile clapped her hands together thrice as a summons to her attendant.

The echo had scarcely died away when the ayah entered from an inner chamber, and approached the maiden's couch with swift, noiseless tread.

"Tears, my sweet!" she exclaimed, in astonishment, looking upon the flushed face of her young mistress. "Tears, my pretty golden-haired darling! Who has dared to grieve you? Who has dared to wound your feelings?" Her tone grew fierce, and she looked around as if in search of someone upon whom to wreak her vengeance. "Tell, Renee, my pet!"

She knelt down beside the couch and drew to her breast the little sunny head of Cecile, and bent over it her berry-brown face, illumined with a strong and passionate affection.

Her black, keen eyes grew very soft as they beamed upon the lily-like beauty of her darling, and in incoherent tones she murmured in Hindostanee words of tenderest import.

"Tell me, my sweet English flower," she said, heaping caresses upon the maiden; "Renee will avenge you?"

But Cecile wept on, soothed by the fierce sympathy of her ayah, and it was some time—a period of torture to Renee—before she sobbed:—

"Renee, she—mamma—is going to leave part of her fortune to Hellice. It is shameful. I hate Hellice. I always hated her, but now more than ever!"

"Renee hates her too," cried the Hindoo, fiercely. "What? Shall she come between you and the great fortune which I foresaw you should possess? Shall she lessen your gold, your lands and your honours? Never, while Renee lives. Does Lady Redwoode fancy that she may have been mistaken and that Hellice may be her child?"

The Ayah's eyes glistened like those of a tigress, and she put her hand to her bosom as if to grasp a concealed weapon.

"No, she says not, but she has a vague doubt, I know. What if that doubt should deepen? What if, by her arts, Hellice should win my place?"

"She never will!" cried Renee, confidently, speaking in her native tongue, and clasping her young mistress closer. "Before that day



can arrive Renee will sweep Hellice and Lady Redwoode and that sharp-eyed lawyer—all of them—from your path like figures from a chess-board. Hush your weeping, my blue-eyed bird. Do you think Renee is stupid and blind, and that her brains and her hands are paralyzed?"

Cecile dried her tears and looked up into the darkly significant face of her attendant.

"What do you mean, Renee?" she faltered, tears studding her eyelashes like glistening gems.

Again Renee directed a cautious, guilty look about the apartment, and then she scrutinized her young mistress closely, as if to estimate her probable reception of her purposed communication. Satisfied that that reception would be favourable, she arranged herself comfortably in a kneeling position and cast about in her own mind for words in which to clothe her hideous thoughts.

## CHAPTER X.

Of, what seems

A trife, a mere nothing, by itself,  
In some nice situation turns the scale  
Of fate, and rules the most important actions.  
—Tannered.

MARGARET SORREL, from her concealment among the ruins at Sea View, continued to watch with gloomy, envious eyes the movements of Hellice Glinwick and Sir Richard Haughton in their progress to the gate; but when the East Indian girl had hastened alone on her return to Redwoode, the actress crept from her shelter, crossed the broken upper floor, regardless of pitfalls, and rapidly descended the stairs.

She paused a moment at its foot in indecision, but a sudden impulse brought a ruddy glow to her cheeks and a fierce sparkle to her black eyes.

Acting upon that impulse, she gathered up her robust figure with an attempt at stateliness, drew around her like classic drapery her simple cloak, and with slow and measured steps quitted the ruins and walked down the long avenue to the gate at which the Baronet lingered.

He was still standing there, oblivious of her approach and of the scene around him, conscious only of a slender girlish figure moving along the road in the distance—a figure bright with scarlet and gold, and instinct with a wild, free, and exquisite grace.

He was looking after her with a longing tenderness, his soul in his glowing face; and his divorced wife as she paused beside him, could see that a wondrous light was shining in his eyes—welling up from his very soul—the light of a pure, holy, and passionate love, such as he had never bestowed upon her.

Her soul was on fire with jealous rage at her discovery.

Her fierce eyes blazed, her countenance assumed the menacing expression it had worn at their parting on the previous day, and when she would have spoken, only a hoarse whisper issued from her lips.

And still, unconscious of her presence, Sir Richard Haughton's soul remained steeped in a blissful reverie, beside which the optimater's paradise would have seemed a frightful pandemonium.

For a full minute the picture remained unchanged, and then, as if warned of the presence of an enemy, the Baronet started, looked up, and abruptly retreated several paces, his countenance expressing astonishment and aversion.

It seemed to him as though, after dreaming of an angel, he had awakened to find himself face to face with a hideous Medusa.

The divorced wife comprehended his manner, and as he turned to leave her presence without speaking, she sprang forward, clutched his arm fiercely, and, lifting one arm aloft as if invoking maledictions upon him, hissed one word—

"Beware!"

With that word ringing in his ears she passed out of the gate, leaving him to the changed currents of his thoughts.

A few moments later, a strange, mocking laugh floated back to him, and he shuddered at its sound, and with slow steps returned to his dwelling.

The woman sped on for some distance as if pursued, then turned into the grove through an unlatched gate, and proceeded to a little dell, in the security of which she had left her horse.

She found him without difficulty, mounted, and rode out again, into the high road, spurring on her steed to the extent of its greatest speed.

Margaret Sorel was devoid of the softer graces that heighten, like dewdrops on a rose, the loveliness of woman.

Her soul was fierce, keen, and strong; and, but for her wild, mad love of her former husband, she would have been as emotionless as a statue. But even that love could not wholly change her masculine qualities.

She rode along, moody and silent, never breaking into those moans and wails to which younger or weaker women would have given way, and never once murmuring a word by which her state of mind might be guessed.

Once or twice she struck her horse savagely, finding relief in the sufferings of the poor animal, and she compressed her lips together in a sternly resolute manner, and looked gloomily from out her stern black eyes upon a landscape which, in her bitterness and rage, she would have ploughed with salt.

She had proceeded two or three miles in this manner when she was aroused from her hateful, angry thoughts by the approach of a horseman, who slackened his speed on beholding her, and who halted under a tree, waiting for her to come up to him. He was her brother, Mr. Thomas Sorel. As she came nearer, he looked at her with an anxious countenance, and exclaimed,—

"Well, Margaret, what luck?"

"The worst," she answered, savagely, checking her horse to a walk.

"You did not see him then?" inquired her brother, adapting his speed to hers.

"Yes, I saw him!" replied the woman, in a jerking manner, as if every word cost her a pang. "I went to Sea View, and hid myself among the ruins, intending to bring about another interview with him. But while I was concealed there a young girl came to make a sketch of the place, I suppose, for she carried a drawing portfolio in her hand. He followed her to the ruins, talked with her, escorted her to the gate, and looked after her with a look he never gave to me. I know he loves her!"

She concluded her speech in a cold, hard voice, her eyes shone fiercely, her face burned with a fiery glow, and her lips were set in an intensely bitter and unconcealed expression, that testified to her brother that she would not let events take their rightful course.

"Who is this young girl?" he asked.

"He called her, or she called herself, Hellice Glinwick. It's an odd name, and she is a remarkable-looking girl. I never saw her counterpart. I thought she had a foreign look, but she spoke English perfectly."

"I know who she is!" exclaimed Mr. Sorel. "She is Lady Redwoode's niece, lately come from India. I heard of her in, this morning, that Lady Redwoode's daughter, by a first marriage, has come home, bringing a cousin with her. It is the chief subject of gossip in the village, for the Redwoode servants have told everybody about the young heiress who looks like an angel; and about her cousin, who is even more lovely. Did you think her beautiful, Margaret?"

"Don't ask me!" she returned fiercely. "Do you wish me to praise my rival in his love? Would you have me praise of a beauty which I hate, and which I would destroy if I had the power? I read a story once of a Russian lady who had a rival, and one evening she contrived to entrap this rival to her

own dwelling on some trivial pretext, then she bound her, seared her face with hot irons, and transformed all that magnificent beauty that had won her lover's heart into a hideous scar. Would that I might do the same with this young girl whom Sir Richard Haughton loves!"

Her brother was frightened at her vehemence and malignity, and looked at her with an expression of fear.

"I should not like to offend you, Margaret," he said, involuntarily.

"You think me terrible?" she asked, with a curling lip. "You do not half comprehend me, Mr. Thomas Sorel. I am a very demon in my hate. My anger is like a sinndon that destroys all whom it touches!"

She spoke with a fierce impetuosity that increased his awe of her.

"I offered him love," she continued, mysteriously, "but, if he continues to refuse it, I shall become to him a terrible Nemesis! He shall have no cup of joy but what I will poison it; he shall have no hopes but I will turn to horrible fears; his smiles I will turn to tears, and his laughter to wailing! Sir Richard Haughton had better have died in the hour he scorned me!"

Mr. Sorel shuddered at her menacing tone, and said,—

"You can depend upon me always, Margaret. I don't like this proud Baronet, and I should like to see him humbled. It is possible that you may win him back again. They say that love never dies, and that the first affection can never be subdued. Give him a chance to see you under more favourable auspices. Heighten your beauty by the arts you understand so well. My motto, like yours shall be 'Love or Revenge!'"

The actress stretched out her gauntleted hand, and Mr. Sorel clasped it, as a seal to the bond between them. He winced slightly under her fierce, strong grasp, and when she released his hand he looked at it with a rueful face. They then rode on slowly without speaking.

Mr. Sorel was the first to break the silence. Happening to put his hand to his breast, he started, and exclaimed,—

"Ah! I had nearly forgotten; I have good news for you, Margaret. Here are some letters that arrived for you after you had set out for Sea View. Your godmother is dead at last and has left you all she possessed, much more than we dreamed of. The lawyer who wrote, says the property amounts to about three thousand pounds; besides that gloomy out-of-the-world Rookery in which she lived during the seventy years. Read for yourself."

He handed her a packet of letters, and the actress took them and perused them as if she felt not a particle of interest in their contents. But on reading the lawyer's formal epistle her countenance warmed a little, and she said,—

"This legacy comes at the right time, Thomas. I am incapable now of standing before crowded audiences and declaiming the woes and passions of others when my heart seems a mass of seething fire. The sight of Sir Richard Haughton has made me mad; I think. My thoughts are all of him. When I sleep I dream of him. Waking, I scheme continually to win him back to me. It is a relief to be able to forget the petty wants and cares which I have laboured to provide for. Three thousand pounds will be a little fortune to me."

"But the Rookery—you will sell that?"

"No, I may need it as a harbour of refuge," answered the woman, grimly. "It seems to me at the right time. I doubt, if in all England, there can be found a more retired dwelling than the Rookery. Perhaps, when I have failed in everything but the wreaking of my revenge I may bury myself at the Rookery and abjure the hateful world!"

"It is as well to keep it, perhaps. We ought to leave here to-day, Margaret, and look after this property of yours."

"I cannot, will not, leave this place yet!" interrupted the woman, quickly. "I would

rather lose every penny of this legacy than leave Sir Richard Haughton to the fascinations of this East Indian girl, and I not here to watch them! I will empower you to act for me. My godmother's lawyer knows you well, and you can take possession of the property in my name. The money you can place to my credit in the bank. You can visit the Rookery, see if the old servant is alive yet, and make arrangements with her for remaining in my service. When you have done all this you can return here, where I shall be awaiting you."

Mr. Sorel would have made some objections to this plan, but he was accustomed to defer in all things to his sister's stronger will and to look upon her decisions as irrevocable. So he acceded to her wishes, promising a faithful observance of them, and neither spoke again until their ride had terminated.

At the moment of concluding their arrangement they had come upon the brink of a hill, below which nestled the pretty little village of Wharton, the market-town and railway-station nearest Redwoode and Sea View. It consisted of a long, pleasant street, green with the plentiful foliage of the trees, among which picturesque homes were embowered. At one end of the village was the railway station. In the centre of the village the street widened into a square, in which the inn, the few public buildings, several shops, and a market were situated. It bore the name of Market Square.

In the inn, which was known as the Cat and Magpie, Margaret Sorel and her brother had found refuge, after leaving the roadside inn to which we first introduced the former to the reader. Their present quarters were comfortable, and within six miles of Sea View, a very desirable qualification for the scheming, divorced wife.

The brother and sister rode along the quiet village street, unmindful of the anxious, wondering stare of the pedestrians they encountered, and cantered into the inn court, where they dismounted, and gave their steeds in charge of a stable-boy. They then ascended to the sitting-room which they shared in common.

Miss Sorel's first act was to tear off her riding-hat and fling it upon the floor; her second to take possession of a chair, and pull off her gloves with a roughness that reduced them to absolute ruin. Then, with a moody, gloomy look, she repeated and amplified her directions concerning her newly-acquired property, and enjoined him to set out at once upon her business.

"But what will you do in my absence, Margaret?" said Mr. Sorel, hesitatingly.

"I will look after Sir Richard's affairs," she answered. "I must see this girl face to face, learn if she is likely to look favourably upon Sir Richard, and, in short, make her acquaintance. I shall do nothing rashly, and shall be careful under what circumstances I next obtrude my presence upon the man who was my husband. I shall be cunning—as cunning as a serpent, but I fear not quite so harmless as a dove. I have henceforth but one motive in life—to win back the love of Sir Richard Haughton, or to wreak a deadly revenge upon him and this girl who has dared to look kindly upon him."

Her voice had a startling intonation that caused her weaker-minded brother again to look frightened. He moved away from her and began to engage in his task of packing a portmanteau, looking at her now and then from under his brows in an apprehensive way that would have pleased and flattered his sister had she not been too preoccupied to notice it. When he had thrust clothing, brushes, bottles, and other appurtenances of the toilet into a heterogeneous mass, and had locked his valise, he looked at his watch and said,—

"The first train leaves in a few minutes, Margaret, and I must be off. I shall be back as soon as I can finish the business. If you should need me, you can telegraph to the Rookery. Good-bye."

He shook hands with her, took up his valise, and departed.

The divorced wife remained in her seat, plunged in a gloomy reverie for a full hour after his departure. The subject of her thoughts could only be guessed at from such indications as her lowering brow, her compressed, determined lips, and her strange habit of clasping her hands so tightly that her sharp nails were embedded in her flesh. She did not speak, or give vent to a sign of emotion, but remained quiet and almost motionless; at last she arose with a heavy sigh and began pacing the floor.

In her progress to and fro she happened to catch a glimpse of her reflection in a small mirror between the windows; she went up to it and surveyed it earnestly, with something of a scornful glance. With one hand she put back the heavy masses of hair from her face that not a line nor trace of her gipsy beauty might escape her observation, but there was little triumph or exultation in her gaze.

"My face has changed since it won him," she thought. "He used to call me his Juno. I am anything but a goddess in his eyes now. And yet I cannot believe that my power over him is entirely gone. For all these years he has lived a hermit's life for love of me. If I could only break down the barrier of his pride, he would take me back again. His parents are dead, his uncle is a harmless lunatic, and there is no one to stand between us—no one but this East Indian girl for whom he has conceived a short-lived fancy. If she were removed from his path, I could win him back."

She turned that last thought over and over in her mind until it grew to a hideous significance. Then she proceeded to map out her plans with clearness, deciding what she should do in any and every turn of events, and in the end reasoned herself into a state of quiet hopefulness.

By this time it was past noon and she rang for her luncheon, which was brought to her without delay. She sipped her chocolate and ate her roll leisurely and thoughtfully, and when she had finished her repast and its fragments had been removed, she supplemented it with a glass of wine that brought a steady redness to her cheeks and an unwavering brightness to her eyes. Producing a small-sized travelling-bag, she then packed it with articles from her trunks that properly belonged to her theatrical wardrobe, adding to her clothing a small mirror, some boxes of white and carmine powders, a bottle containing a liquid dye for the complexion, and various other necessities for a stage toilet.

It was in a new theatre of operations and amid new scenes that the actress intended to use them now.

When her arrangements were all completed she summoned a servant and stated, to avoid being made the object of curious conjecture, that she was going on a visit to a friend in the neighbourhood and might not return until late at night or early next day. This explanation accounted for her travelling-bag, and she ordered her horse to be saddled, confident that the inmates of the inn would not trouble themselves concerning her movements.

Her order was speedily obeyed, for Miss Sorel was liberal of gratuities, she mounted, and rode through the village, in the direction from which she had lately come.

When she had gained the hill beyond the rows of habitations she gave rein to her horse and sped onwards between the green, blossoming hedges and in the shade of the trees that here and there almost embowered the road. She passed Sea View at a smart pace, looking stealthily at it from under her lashes, half hoping and half fearing to meet Sir Richard Haughton.

She noticed that a couple of well-bred horses were standing before his door, although they were at the end of a long avenue, and she noticed upon the wide portico a figure which, with a great bound of her heart, she believed

to belong to her divorced husband, but which a moment later she decided to be that of Mr. William Haughton.

"They are going to call at Redwoode," she thought, rightfully enough, but with singular resentfulness. "They must not see me, for I am going there too."

She hurried on to a gate that opened into the park of Redwoode, dismounted, opened it, and led her horse into the shadow of the trees. She next secured the gate as she had found it, remounted, and rode along a path which, she conjectured, would lead her to the mansion. She had that morning, before visiting Sea View, become partially familiar with one approach to Redwoode, having seen a woodman open the gate by which she had now entered, closing it without looking it, and had watched his progress for some little distance.

At the foot of the hill crowned by the dwelling she again dismounted, tied her horse to a tree, and made on foot the ascent, pausing now and then to rest, or to conceal herself from observation of woodmen or gardeners. She crossed the swollen brook by a marble arch, and kept on in the path until she had gained level ground and at the same time the entrance of a round marble temple, which a glance assured her to be untenanted. The mansion was visible at some little distance through the trees, but no one was within sight. Having assured herself of this fact, Margaret Sorel moved stealthily towards the door of the temple, gave another glance around, and then glided in swiftly, closed and locked the door behind her.

(To be continued.)

A QUESTION seems a simple and innocent thing, yet it may often be a real instrument of persecution on a small scale. It may put a man into a position in which he must choose either what he would prefer to keep to himself or refuse to answer and accept whatever unpleasant results may ensue from such refusal. Every thoughtful person who wishes to do as he would be done by will abstain from placing another in such a dilemma. All good conversation demands careful consideration of the feelings of others. Where there is the least suspicion that certain subjects may be unpleasant or certain inquiries unwelcome, no pains should be spared to avoid them. Of course this applies chiefly to general or friendly conversation. There are doubtless cases where duty compels investigation at whatever expense of feeling, but these are few and exceptional. Flippant and thoughtless curiosity has no such motive to excuse it.

NAPOLEON'S CARRIAGE.—The carriage in which the first Napoleon made his famous retreat from Moscow, and in which he, as emperor, set out from Paris on the campaign which closed at Waterloo, is now preserved in London among the effects of the Duke of Wellington. It is a two-seated conveyance, and the top, or cover, is lined with thin sheet-iron. There is also a front curtain of iron which can be lowered at will. The wheels are large and heavy, and the steps at either side silver finished and of a curious design. The rear seat was the one used by Napoleon. Under the cushions of the seat he carried blankets and pillows. The back of the front seat opens, and at the right hand forms a cupboard, in which were plates, knives, spoons, water-can, and a small fluid lamp. On the left is a small opening extending forward near the "dash board," and into which the emperor of the first nation in Europe and the military autocrat of the world was wont to extend his hands and legs in order that he might lie at full length. The blankets, pillows, spoons, knives and lamps that were used by the emperor are still preserved.



## BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.

—3:—

## CHAPTER XII.—(continued.)

"MARGARET, did you see Jock? I can't find him."

Jock is Mona's choicest possession, a rough terrier given to her by Rex Challoner, and Jock has been laid up with distemper, and tended carefully by Mona, with a tenderness that is not perhaps altogether for the dog's own sake.

Margaret is not fond of animals; she has disliked the dog always, and she looks up now crossly.

Grandmamma said he was unwholesome, and Edward—

"What have you done with him?"

A dawning of fear blanches Mona's face.

"I left him quite comfortable in the stable, and he was better, and now he is gone. Where is he, Margaret?"

"What a state you get into, just because that stupid Mr. Challoner gave you the dog!"

Margaret with a view to pleasing her grandmother has held herself strictly aloof from any intimacy with the Challoners. The society of her Edward is enough for her at all times—when she can get it.

But Edward has not been very attentive of late. Mrs. Rea continues in provoking good health, and the marriage is further off than ever, so Margaret is not in the sweetest of humours when Mona bursts into the room, with her indignant demands for Jock.

"Where is my poor dog?" she asks again, a dread, horrible feeling taking possession of her that something has been done to Jock.

"Edward took him," says Margaret, sullenly. "Grandmamma told him to, and he took him away in the trap. He will cure him, perhaps. In any case, it wasn't my fault."

"Dr. Smith took him! Oh, poor—poor Jock!"

And Mona bursts into tears. Margaret looks on with increasing temper.

"What a fool to cry over a stupid, diseased dog. I don't wonder at grandmamma objecting to him. Where are you going, Mona?"

"To get Jock," Mona answers, drying her tears, and speaking with a kind of desperate determination. "Alive or dead I will get him; he shall not be tortured. My poor dog, and he was so fond of me!"

"But Edward has him at his house," protests Margaret.

"I don't care; I will go and get him!"

"Such a scene about nothing," snaps Margaret. "And it will look very extraordinary to have you tearing off to Edward's house alone."

But Mona has left the room, and then Margaret sees her in her outdoor things speeding away, and then she goes upstairs and tells Mrs. Rea that Mona is a shameless, forward girl; that, not content with roaming the fields all day with that Mr. Challoner, she has gone racing off by herself now to Dr. Smith's about her idiotic dog.

"Where is my dog? Where is Jock?"

Angry and breathless Mona stands before Dr. Smith, bearding him in his own house, and he stands and looks at her while the colour mounts to his face.

He had not meant Margaret to tell Mona about the dog, but to let Mona suppose that her grandmother had had poor Jock comfortably disposed of.

And now here stands Mona, with flaming cheeks and wrathful eyes confronting him.

"Have you killed him?" she asks, looking him straight in the eyes. "Dr. Smith, have you done anything to my dog? Tell me the truth?"

"I didn't know he was yours," he says, evasively. "The dog couldn't have recovered."

"Then you have killed him? Poor Jock!"

and Mona burst out crying. "No; don't say anything. You are a bad, cruel man, and nothing you could say could make any difference!" shuddering and turning away, and then suddenly facing him again.

"How am I to know he is dead? How do I know that you are not keeping him for some purpose of your own? You needn't deny it. Margaret told me that you torture animals, and make them endure a living death!" She is beside herself with anger and sorrow. Poor faithful Jock that Rex had given her. "Where is he? I will have my dog!"

"You can't; he was thrown into the sea." and then, as a burst of weeping shakes Mona from head to foot, he comes nearer. "Mona! Mona! don't cry like that. I swear I didn't hurt the dog, and only for Margaret I wouldn't have touched him!"

"I don't care! Why did you do it?" Mona cries, looking up with streaming eyes. "I was so fond of him, and he was getting quite well!" with a pitiful break in her voice.

"I hated the brute because Challoner gave him to you!" Dr. Smith says very low. "I hate to see you with that man—to see you talk to him and him talk to you. I suppose I am mad, base, wicked. I am pledged to Margaret, and I love you with my whole heart and soul!"

And as with the drops hanging on her lashes, and a great fear sending the colour from cheeks and lips, Mona looks at him. He comes a step nearer, and before she can move has caught her in his arms, and his face is bent low—close to hers; she can feel his breath upon her cheek—can almost feel his burning eyes fixed on hers.

"I love you! I love you!" he whispers, forgetting Margaret, prudence, everything in the madness of the moment. But with a gasping cry Mona breaks from him, and flies from the room and the house, fear and indignation lending speed to her feet.

How dared he, how dared he! she thinks, passionately, stumbling and running with the blazing indignation scorching up her tears, and even Jock forgotten in the rage and humiliation of the moment. What could he have taken her for, when he dared to insult her like that, to talk to her of love?

Frightened and angry her passion turns to very womanly tears, as she wonders; with a quick heart throb, what would Rex have thought? And creeping down the rocks, Mona sits and cries as long and bitterly as she will.

In the cool, sweet hush of the evening he is watching and waiting for her; thinking of the moment when she will lay her little hand in his, and give that hand for ever into his keeping. She will come soon now, he thinks, looking along the broken line of shore where the tide is lapping lazily in; soon he shall see the slight figure he loves so well; soon, soon, he shall hear her voice, see her smile. This is her favourite spot, here where the rocks form a little bay, and the many-coloured seaweeds lie tangled on the beach.

And then she comes; but how changed is his love! No smile dawns in her eyes, and her step is weary and slow; and then he sees that her eyes are heavy from long crying, and her cheeks very pale. It is a very tired, troubled face that the spring sunlight falls upon.

When she is mine she shall never look like that, he thinks, with all a lover's certainty of winning and keeping happiness.

"What is it, dear?" he whispers, as he takes her hand into the close pressure of his large palm, and keeps it there.

Mona hardly notices the tenderly whispered word; a great sob rises in her throat, as she turns to him instinctively for comfort.

"He has killed poor Jock!"

"Who killed Jock?" and a great light of tenderness shines in Rex Challoner's eyes, while his heart beats like a girl's, as he feels the hand he loves lying unrebuked in his.

"Dr. Smith. Oh, Mr. Challoner, my poor Jock. And how am I to know what tortures he went through?"

"How dared he?" and Rex's face darkens suddenly; "how dared he make you grieve!"

And Mona tells him the story shortly and passionately, and he listens, and feels as if he could kill Dr. Smith for his conduct.

That other part of the story, Mona cannot—will not—speak of. That shameful insult, and his treachery to Margaret.

"Poor, poor Jock!" she says, with lips that tremble, and lifts her eyes to see in his a wondrous tenderness and pity, and a sudden bright, beautiful blush rushes over her face.

And he? All he had meant to say is forgotten—all the long explanation of his poverty and the farm in New Zealand passes clean out of his mind. He only knows that within reach of his arms stands the woman he loves, and he takes her to his heart, with only a very low whisper.

"Be my wife, and no one shall ever grieve you any more."

"And you won't be afraid to go with me to the other side of the world, darling?"

Rex's face is radiant. They are setting side by side in Paradise hand-in-hand; and Mona lifts shy, happy eyes to his, and says she won't be afraid to go with him anywhere.

And he talks of their happy home in a far country; of the roughing it at first, and the fortune to be made afterwards; and only the sea-birds are near to listen to their love-making.

"I suppose I must manage to get acquainted with your grandmother, Mona? Will she let me have you, do you think?"

"Grandmamma doesn't care what happens to me," Mona answers.

"But you will tell her, darling?"

"Yes," with a quick blush. "And I will say that you would like to know her."

And then, as he is hers now, and she is his, she tells him the sad story of her mother's life.

"Poor child!" he whispers. "Mona, darling, I know it all now, but no harsh grandmother or anyone shall ever make you unhappy again. They will have to tackle me first," laughing gleefully in his happiness. "Come with me, and tell Nellie," he says, gently; "she is so fond of you, and I know she will be glad."

There is not much need to tell. Mrs. Challoner is busy in her garden when the pair appear, and one look into the two faces and Nellie flings her tools to the ground, and rushes forward radiant to embrace Mona, and to offer a shower of congratulations.

"Now wasn't I right?" she whispers, in an aside to Rex. "Dear old Rex. I wish you every happiness from the bottom of my heart, and how nice of you to bring Mona to us at once!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

"But, surely you won't go to New Zealand before you are married, Rex?" Mrs. Challoner asks, blankly.

Rex and Mona have been engaged for a week, and Nellie is anxious to have the wedding-day fixed.

"I hate long engagements," she says.

"So do I," agrees Rex; "but I can't expose Mona to the chance of no home or anything, so I have quite decided, Nell, on going out first; and then, after I have bought the land, will come straight back, and we can be married."

"And have you seen Mrs. Rea?"

"Not yet. Mona thinks she will see me, though."

"Well, Rex, my impression is that that disagreeable Margaret has a great deal to do with Mrs. Rea's dislike to Mona. That story of her mother's marriage is all nonsense; people don't do those kind of things now-a-days, and Mona is so pretty, no one could dislike her," which sentiment Mr. Challoner thoroughly endorses.

And so it is settled that he is to start for

Now Zealand immediately, but Rex is fated not to make old Mrs. Rea's acquaintance. Suddenly, without warning, she falls ill—dangerously ill. Bronchitis, Dr. Smith declares, acute bronchitis; and Margaret realises with a thrill of hope that her grandmother is really ill at last.

In the sick-room she is indefatigable, kind, attentive, and watchful, carrying out the doctor's orders with the greatest care—never absent from her post, never tired, never fussy. No one could be a better sick nurse; and yet, all the hours she sits there in the half-darkness, she sees but one object in view—one goal before her, now nearly reached—the day when she shall stand at the altar, and give herself and her forty thousand pounds into Dr. Edward Smith's keeping.

It seems very, very near now; it is not likely that anything can happen now. Mona is religiously banished from the sick-room.

"It worries grandmamma to see you, Mona. It is very kind of you to offer to nurse her, but I know she wouldn't like it; she said so to me."

So Mona is not allowed inside the door.

Once Mrs. Rea, toosing wearily, asks in a hoarse, fretful voice, why Mona never comes to ask for her.

"I gave her a home, I have been kind to her, kinder than she had a right to expect," she whispers.

Margaret bends down over the poor old woman.

"Indeed, you have been kind to Mona, grandmamma, most kind. I thought she might have offered to come and sit with you sometimes, but, you see, she is always with Mr. Challoner. They are to be married, you know."

"I know," and Mrs. Rea says no more; and Margaret goes back to her seat by the fire, where the light flickers on her fair hair and anxious face.

"I wonder will she last long?" she thinks. "A few days, I fancy; she is very weak," listening to the heavy breathing and restless moans of the patient. A hard glitter comes into Margaret's eyes.

"The moment grandmamma is dead Mona shall leave the house. I am determined on that," and she sits in silence, working out her plans.

Dr. Smith has a very bad opinion of Mrs. Rea; bronchitis is a very dangerous thing in an old person. He visits her three times a day, and Margaret gazes into his face as if the fate of nations hung upon his words. He can read her anxiety well enough.

He does not love her any longer, but he will marry her; forty thousand pounds isn't a bad thing after all, even with Margaret attached to it.

But he feels that he would give it all up for one kiss from a girl's proud, scornful mouth—would give up every chance of the legacy to hear Mona say she loved him.

"And she would have loved me, too, only for that fellow turning up," he thinks, conscious of his own powers of attraction. "I would have made her care for me in spite of herself. She only held back, first on account of Margaret, and afterwards because she got to like Challoner. She would have loved me!"

And yet, was he blind to her look of horror and loathing, as he had seized her in his embrace that day when, in her tears and anger, she had driven him to madness, and he could find it in his heart to course Margaret and her forty thousand pounds!

But to hear them together within earshot of the patient anyone would have said, what a devoted granddaughter! what a kind thoughtful doctor! Margaret, with her own hands, making poultices, and bringing up beef tea, poor Martin being snubbed into submission.

"She is so noisy, and I understand dear grandmamma better than anyone else," she explains, sweetly, to her Edward, and then she goes through a play of following him into the passage, and her voice can be heard,—

"And you really think grandmamma is better?"

And then, after a moment she is back in the sick-room again, and bending over the bed.

"Edward says you are ever so much better, grandmamma."

"Much Edward cares!" mutters the hoarse, weak voice once. "You will both be glad when I am gone."

But Margaret can be very nice when she pleases, and she always manages to coax Mrs. Rea back into good humour again.

Lonesome Lodge is gloomy, indeed, these days, though the spring sunshine is flooding the world outside, and the wide sea lies like a shining mirror.

Within all is solitude and gloom. Mona has never seen her grandmother since the day she was taken ill.

"It's my opinion Miss Margaret is keeping you out, miss," Martin suggests once, but Mona shakes her head.

"No, Martin; grandmamma never liked me, you know. I am sure that is the reason."

Whatever the reason is, the facts remain the same. Margaret never leaves Mrs. Rea's room, and in answer to any of Mona's offers of assistance has always the same answer,—

"Grandmamma would rather not see you."

One evening Margaret comes down for a little while, leaving Mrs. Rea in the housemaid's charge, Martin having been given to understand that this new arrangement is by her mistress's wish.

The two girls have dinner together, and afterwards stay in the drawing-room a little while.

"When does Mr. Challoner go to New Zealand?" Margaret asks, making herself more agreeable than usual.

"In about three weeks," Mona answers, looking down with a smile on a ring that gleams on her finger. "His mother lives at Cannes, and he is going first to see her, and to tell her about his plans."

"I suppose you are very fond of him, Mona?"

"Yes," breathes Mona, softly.

Margaret is leaning back in a low chair—Mrs. Rea's own particular chair—her feet on the fender, and she has on a pretty soft pink dress, for though she is sick-nursing she always likes to look her best for Edward.

"I suppose I shall be married first," she remarks, after a pause given to thought. "Poor Edward won't like to be kept waiting."

"I suppose as soon as grandmamma is well," replies Mona, and Margaret stares at her.

"As soon as grandmamma is dead, you mean. It is nonsense to look shocked, Mona; she is very old, and people must die sometimes—or rather at some time."

"And you mean to say you wish her to die?"

"Of course I do, and so would you if you were in my place. Why, you can't think what it has been to me and Edward, this waiting and waiting; and only he couldn't bear me to have to put up with poverty we would have been married long ago!"

Mona's face grows suddenly crimson. She thinks of that awful moment when Dr. Smith had seized her in his arms, and told her it was her he loved, not Margaret.

She must speak, come what will!

"Margaret, are you sure that Dr. Smith loves you as you love him?"

"Of course I am!" Margaret says, angrily. "How dare you cast a doubt on Edward's love, Mona? You wouldn't like me to say anything against Mr. Challoner?"

"No one could say anything about him," Mona answers, with the soft, lovely light that always shines in her eyes when she thinks of Rex.

Margaret changes the subject suddenly, the loyalty of her Edward not being altogether a pleasant topic.

"What changes I shall make here—in the awful drawing-room, for instance; or, perhaps,

Edward and I might go away and live somewhere else—somewhere where his talents will be known and appreciated. I have taken a list of the plate and the linen for fear any of the servants may walk off with anything. All grandmamma's clothes I will give to Martin, and pay her off to get rid of her; but there will be a great deal to do after the funeral. I will give you your mourning, of course, Mona, and we won't want much, as we are both going to be married."

How horrid it sounds! How heartless to hear her discussing such things with the poor woman still alive upstairs; Margaret, still mistress of everything in anticipation, goes on,—

"I know that grandmamma has some diamonds, for I saw them once, long ago, and she must have a great deal of ready-money in the bank. I shall be very rich, Mona, very—very rich!"

Her manner is restless and excited, her cheeks are flushed.

"I think you might wait till poor grandmamma is dead," Mona says, in deep disgust, as Margaret hurries about the room, opening desks and cabinets, things that had been sacred when Mrs. Rea was downstairs.

"What does it matter? They are as good as mine already! Edward says grandmamma can't recover, her strength will never hold out," continuing her researches round the room. "If we do go to London, or anywhere else I will keep all the miniatures and nice old things, and have an auction of the rubbish. Fancy, Mona," wheeling round suddenly, "can you picture the bliss of being able to dress just as you like, and do everything you please?"

"No, I never thought of it," replies Mona.

And then she makes one more sudden attempt to show her cousin what Dr. Smith really is, and by so doing makes Margaret her enemy for ever.

"Margaret," she begins, with a pale face, and steady eyes; "do not be angry with me for what I am going to say. Be rich if you like, have all the money—everything, but do not marry that man; he is not worth it."

"Not marry Edward?" shrieks Margaret, in a high key. "Why, may I ask?"

"Because he is not worthy of you, Margaret; he is not, indeed. I know it, I assure you."

"Go on," says Margaret, with outward calmness of manner, and her blood at boiling heat.

"It is true," Mona says, bravely. "Dr. Smith is a bad, cruel man; he only cares for poor grandmamma's money, and he doesn't love you, Margaret. I know it."

"How do you know?" in the same hard voice.

"I know it," says Mona, with a wave of crimson dyeing her whole face; "because he told me it was me he loved. He is false to you, Margaret."

"You lie!" cried Margaret, in a low voice, perfectly livid with passion. "You are false yourself; you came and tried to steal him from me, and I hate you, and as soon as I am mistress here I will turn you out of the house."

"I steal him!"

And Mona manages to throw a fine amount of withering contempt into the three words, which infuriates Margaret.

"I don't believe one word of Edward making love to you. It is utterly untrue, and nothing can shake my belief in him."

Mona says nothing, and her silence is more maddening than any words.

"You will be very sorry for all this yet," Margaret says, passionately; "when I am mistress here, and I won't give you one penny—not one farthing."

"I wouldn't take your money, Margaret," Mona answers, her colour rising. "And I shall never stay here when Lonesome Lodge belongs to you. I am sure Mrs. Challoner will let me stay with her till Rex comes home."



"I don't care where you stay. You are a mean, spying girl, and I wish I had never seen your face."

And with this parting shot Margaret conveys herself and her temper out of the room.

The weather has changed, the summer that seemed to have so nearly come has vanished. A cold, east wind sweeps over the sea, and it is bitterly cold.

The change of weather affects Mrs. Rea for the worse. She is dangerously ill now, and Margaret feels that all her anxiety is nearly at an end.

Dr. Smith is unremittent in his attentions, and he and Margaret hold long, whispered conversations after each visit to the sick-room, and it seems quite certain that Mrs. Rea must die.

Rex puts off his voyage to New Zealand for a little while, and the idea comes into his mind that, after all, as everything will be unsettled, and Mona will have no home after her grandmother's death, it will be as well for them to be married at once, and to sail for the new world together.

Mona comes over to the Rectory often, and every day she brings worse accounts of Mrs. Rea. Mrs. Challoner is very anxious for the wedding to take place.

"You can be married from here, dear!" she says, "and you and Rex could go to France first to see his mother for your wedding-trip."

"May I come to you at once when grandmamma dies?" Mona asks wisely. "Margaret says I am to leave the house, and I have nowhere to go."

Mrs. Challoner kisses the girl's face fondly. "Come to us whenever you like, Mona."

The rain is driving and beating against the windows of Lonesome Lodge, the wind comes tearing over the sea in loud gusts. The gnarled and twisted trees bend to the blast and set their limbs sturdily to resist the storm. They are accustomed to storms, these trees; they have been torn, and bent, and twisted since infancy, and their arms all turn one way, stretched out as if in appeal.

The great, rough wind rends off their scanty green foliage, in which they had decked themselves in honour of Spring, and the leaves go whirling away in the sheets of driving rain.

A sort of chill twilight has settled down over the world. Mona stands in the drawing-room window, looking out at the storm, and watching the showers of spray leaping up against the rocks. Far away a vessel goes reeling and plunging, labouring wearily amidst the great, grey waves, rolling to and fro.

Upstairs, Dr. Smith and Margaret are holding consultation over Mrs. Rea. She is very weak to-day, Martin tells Mona; the fever running very high, and great weakness.

"Poor lady! she wants keeping up," Martin says, mysteriously. "Miss Mona, she ought to have a nurse, and she ought to have brandy."

"But I suppose Dr. Smith knows what she should have?"

"I daresay he knows it well enough, miss, but the thing is, does she get it? It's my firm belief that now the poor mistress is so bad, and hardly notices anything, that she never gets half the nourishment that goes up for her. She is sinking from weakness—that's what she is!"

"Oh, Martin! such an idea is too dreadful. I know grandmamma is very ill."

"Yes, and those that will benefit by her death are taking care of her. Miss Mona, there are more ways of killing a dog than hanging him; and mark my words, it is as I say!"

The entrance of Dr. Smith sends Martin out of the room. He closes the door carefully, and Mona stands uneasily looking at him.

"How is grandmamma?" she asks, coldly.

"Just the same; there is great prostration."

"So Martin says."

"And Martin ought to know," he rejoins. "I have to write a prescription. May I write it here?"

"Certainly," and Mona moves towards the door.

But Dr. Smith puts himself in front of her. "Why do you run away? I want to speak to you."

"You can have nothing to say, Dr. Smith, that I wish to hear," says Mona, proudly, her chin held high, and a look that Rex has never seen in her eyes.

"Wait one moment," he whispers, hurriedly, his eyes on her face as he speaks, and she meets his gaze with only a cold expression of dislike. "Mona, why are you so cruel to me?"

"Cruel to you?" with withering scorn in her young voice. "Are you worth anything else, Dr. Smith, base traitor that you are?"

"I have never been traitor to you," he says, sulkily. "Mona, I have come here to-night to say something, and I will say it. Your grandmother is dying."

"You have been saying that every day for the last week," says Mona, bitterly. "No doubt you wish her dead, Dr. Smith."

"I do not!" he says, hurriedly. "You misunderstand me; you don't know what I mean."

"Indeed I don't, and I really don't want to. Will you please let me pass?"

But his long fingers, his cruel fingers, Mona thinks, close in a grip of iron on the door-handle; and Mona, with an air of indifference, folds her arms lightly, and stands waiting.

"I am not going to enter into a struggle for the door-handle. You would naturally have the best of it," she says, in a tone that it is to be hoped Rex will never have cause to hear in his little love's sweet voice. "But I beg you will let me out at once."

"Not till you listen to what I have to say, Mona. Your grandmother is dying."

"So you said before," a curl of contempt on her lips. "I have grasped that fact, Dr. Smith; please go on. And when she dies, you will be absolutely dependent on Margaret."

Mona raises her brows.

"Dependent on Margaret? No, certainly not!"

The cold evening light falls on the two faces—the man's dark with feeling, and the girl's pale and angry.

Mona raises her proud young head an inch higher.

"And having told me three times that my grandmother is dying, and my having grasped the fact, will you be so kind as to open the door?"

"I will not!"

Pale as snow, grew the girl's cheeks, but her eyes are fearless, still looking into his face, which is convulsed with passion. She trembles as she sees in the expression of his eyes admiration for herself.

For a moment or two she does not speak. She is frightened, and she will not show it.

Her father may have been one of the people, as Margaret sneeringly had said; she may by right inherit on her father's side none of the qualities of gentle birth; but no Vera de Vere ever showed more proud courage than Mona does now, as she slowly crosses the room and seats herself calmly, and, turning a very white, proud face towards Dr. Smith, says coldly—

"Say what you have to say, and then let me go."

Then suddenly, before she knew or guesses his purpose, he is kneeling at her feet, and his hands have grasped hers, and he is pouring out such a torrent of love that she is silent from sheer terror.

"Only give yourself to me!" he whispers. "I will make you love me, and I will worship you. Why shouldn't you love me?" gazing up into her terrified eyes; and perhaps taking her silence for encouragement he goes on like a whirlwind—

"It is all in my power. I have only to tell that old woman upstairs that Margaret

is hurrying on her death, and she will alter her will, and leave it all to you, Mona. Mona, why do you look at me like that. I—"

"Let me go!" gasps Mona, desperately. "Leave go my hands, and let me tell you, Dr. Smith, that I hate you, and despise you! You are a coward and a traitor!"

Outside the door, with a white, passionate face bent forward listening intently, stands Margaret. She has heard every word—her lover's passionate wooing, his proposition of getting the will altered. Not a word has escaped her. So this is his love for her, and yet—

"I won't give him up!" she gasps. "It is her fault, her's every bit! He shall be mine—all mine!"

Swiftly she darts back into the shadow as the door opens wide, and Mona comes quickly out, and goes down the passage.

One instant later, and Margaret has joined Dr. Smith. He is standing on the hearthrug, staring moodily at his own face in the glass, conscious that most unmanly tears are wetting his cheeks. His vanity has been sorely wounded. Mona's openly expressed loathing of himself and his conduct has wounded him deeply. His face is dark with passion when Margaret comes stealing in, and slips her hand in his with a confiding gesture.

In her heart she would like to box his ears, but that would not be a very wise proceeding, so she forbears, and tries flattery instead, and lays her lips on his hand, fervently.

"Grandmamma seems much worse, Edward."

"I wish she was dead!" he says, harshly. Margaret sighs.

"I shall only care for the money for you, Edward. It is to be all yours, you know."

She has already decided on having it settled on herself, but it won't do to say so. Edward might kick at being utterly dependent on his wife.

His vanity has been hurt to the core, and Margaret's soothing flattery comes at a good moment.

After all, might not a man be far happier with a kittenish wife like Margaret than a wild, half-tamed being with a temper like Mona's, and how she loves him!

Margaret is carefully soothing his ruffled plumes.

"You are a good girl," he says. "We shan't be badly off, eh, Meg?"

He is always in a good humour when he calls her Meg.

The twilight is deepening into darkness. Margaret creeps an inch or two nearer and lays her cheek caressingly on his hand—the hand that makes Mona shudder, when she thinks of the rabbits.

"Edward, what if grandmamma changed her mind after all? She has been asking for Mona several times to-day. Will—will she last long, do you think?" whispering the words, and looking up intently into his face. "It would be dreadful if she altered her will, and that Mr. Challoner would benefit by it; then, oh, Edward, it would kill me, if, after all our waiting, you got nothing!"

"She is not likely to change it now!"

"But she might."

A little nearer she creeps.

"Edward, she is dying, and why should we risk anything—any chance? She must die!"

"She will die," he says, starting a little uneasily, and Margaret steals a hand up caressingly about his neck.

"If she recovered she might alter her will."

"Then she mustn't recover!"

Somehow the clinging hand and arm about his neck feels like a serpent.

Margaret's clear, cold eyes gaze up at him in the gloom.

He turns chilly suddenly.

"What do you mean, Margaret?" he asks, in a whisper. "You and I are to have the money, you know, and I am to marry you. That was all settled long ago."



["IT WOULD BE MURDER," HE WHISPERS, UNDER HIS BREATH.]

"Yes, Edward, but if we didn't get the money, and this afternoon grandmamma was wandering in her mind, and muttering about poor Annie—that was Mona's mother, you know—and then she asked suddenly for Mona, and I said she was with Mr. Challoner and wouldn't come, and grandmamma cried, and said something about justice overtaking her."

"Well," says Dr. Smith, in a low voice, as Margaret stops. "What do you mean by all this, Margaret?"

She looks straight into his eyes, and then, putting her lips to his ear, whispers something.

He draws back hastily, and her hand falls from about his neck.

"It would be murder!" he whispers, under his breath.

"No, no!" breathes Margaret, equally cautiously. "You and I both hate Mona. Why should she have the money to give to that man?"

Hate Mona! Dr. Smith feels as if he would like to strangle the very breath out of that pretty white throat of hers before she should give herself to Rex Challoner.

Margaret, perceiving by his silence that he is yielding, pursues her advantage.

"Everyone knows she is dying, and no one will be surprised to hear she is dead. People sink suddenly from bronchitis, don't they?"

"Yes," says Dr. Smith, a cold sweat breaking out on his forehead, and his hands grow damp. "I tried that once," he says, in a low trembling voice. "My discovery you know, Margaret. I tried it with success on the animal race, and no one could have detected it. It was death from natural causes apparently."

Margaret's eyes glitter.

"And if she dies?" she whispers, rapturously.

"Then it will be all mine, or rather all yours, my love."

And her arms cling round his neck again.

"Edward—Edward, if you forsake me I would die!"

He is not likely to forsake her as long as she is heiress to the forty thousand pounds, and Margaret knows it as well as he does.

But the little tragic exclamation is as a valve to her excited feelings.

"It would be strange," she says, laughing hysterically, "if your happiness was wrecked because an old woman chose to change her mind at the last moment."

"I don't believe she could recover anyway," says Dr. Smith.

"There is a great lack of reactionary power, and she is very weak."

Even Dr. Smith does not know that the beef tea and the port wine ordered for the patient are drunk by Margaret herself.

There are some things that have a singular unpleasant aspect when openly discussed, and this is one of them. And no one ever knows that Margaret's strength is kept up by all the wine, and the soup, and that poor old Mrs. Rea is sinking daily from want of nourishment. Margaret's woman's wits are working rapidly.

"There couldn't be any suspicion if you asked for another doctor first," she suggests; and he looks at her, quickly.

"You would tempt the tempter himself!" he mutters, recoiling from her.

But on the morrow he tells Mrs. Rea, in his softest and blandest tones, that although she is not worse, yet she is seriously ill, and he would prefer to have a second advice called in.

He and Margaret do not look at each other as he says this; but she listens breathlessly to her grandmother's whispered reply.

"If you like; it doesn't much matter now."

And Margaret is very soft and loving to Mrs. Rea.

And the other doctor comes, and thoroughly agrees with Dr. Smith in everything, and

highly approves of his treatment in every way. He suggests a few slight alterations, and orders a new medicine just to show that he has a mind and opinion of his own, and takes his departure with his fee in his pocket, and Margaret goes with him to the door. There are tears in her eyes, as she says, pathetically,—

"I am afraid my poor grandmamma is very ill!"

"Very ill, very ill!" echoes the doctor, struggling into his overcoat. "My dear young lady, we must all get our last summons some day, and in the meantime, though life and death are not in our power, your poor grandmamma could not be in better hands than Dr. Smith."

Then he trundles off in Mrs. Rea's brougham, which has been sent to meet him, much to the disappointment of Martin, who had intended to have a private discussion with the new doctor himself.

"For it's my opinion they are killing the mistress between them," she says, boldly. "Turning me out of my own mistress's room, and keeping that dolt of an Anne to look after her instead!"

Anne is the housemaid, and a young woman whose powers of observation are not her strongest point.

But the "second opinion" has rolled away in the brougham, having said it will not be necessary for him to come again.

And tossing on her pillows the old lady moans and turns restlessly, and is always muttering and talking of her dead daughter "Annie."

And in the darkened room Margaret sits and thinks; and sometimes dare not meet the dying eyes, for fear they should read her thoughts.

(To be continued.)

Good brains are often kept in a poor-looking vessel.





"I AM SORRY TO DISTURB YOU," HAROLD SAID, "BUT I CALLED TO INQUIRE AFTER MR. GREVILLE."

NOVELETTE.]

## AUNT JANEY'S BURDEN.

### CHAPTER I

In a very stiff, formal-looking room, in a very small and extremely genteel house, sat a maiden lady, to whose personal appearance all the adjectives already used might be applied again, except one.

Sarah Jane Haviland, spinster, was stiff, formal, and genteel; but no one could possibly have called her small. There was, indeed, so much of her lengthwise, that an irreverent nephew had once, in the privacy of his own house, compared her to one of those American cane blinds which, the longer they are stretched in one direction, become proportionately narrower in the other. The simile was not an inapt one. Aunt Janey was so thin as to cause an unpleasant fancy she was addicted to starvation, which was a cruel libel, also her dresses always fitted immaculately tight; she wore her collars very low, and her sleeves very short. The glimpses of throat and wrists thus revealed, gave one more the idea of parchment than of flesh and blood, but this is a digression.

At the time our story opens Aunt Janey had commenced to speak of herself as "elderly," which, as she well over sixty, was a mild way of putting it, which none of her relations ventured to contradict. She possessed two married sisters, each boasting a numerous family, and one only brother, the pride of her heart, since he was the head of the family, and his honours reflected a kind of second-hand dignity on his relations.

Thomas Haviland was younger than any of his sisters, and had passed his early years under almost slavish subjection to an old uncle, whose heir he was. The uncle died, Thomas became Lord Morion, a "belted

Earl," with a seat in the House of Lords, and really a splendid rent roll.

The two married sisters and their belongings, as well as the solitary Janey, were quite willing to do homage to the great man; but with a provoking indifference to their calculations, the Earl of Morion announced his intention of travelling. So Morion Grange was shut up, the town-house let for a term of years, and in reply to the many anxious inquiries the bereaved (?) relations addressed to the bankers honoured with their brother's confidence, they were coolly told Lord Morion's plans were still unsettled.

It was provoking!

Mrs. Levick was not rich for her position, Mrs. Sherman—with nine children—was decidedly poor. Think how all the little Levicks and Shermans would have enjoyed long visits to Morion Grange! Think how gladly poor Aunt Janey would have consented to shut up Ivy Cottage and keep house for the Earl! It was inconsiderate of him to forsake such tender ties and spend his whole existence in wandering.

However, as the years went on, and still Lord Morion neglected every duty of his position, his sister Lucinda began to forgive him. At sixty-five she had grandchildren not a few; but her pride centred in her eldest son, a rising lawyer, prosperous and well-to-do. His son, again, was almost twenty-four, and it seemed to the old lady that nothing could have turned out better for these two than her brother's peculiar ways, since now there was every prospect of the lawyer becoming Earl of Morion, and young Harold Viscount Haviland. The Shermans might continue their lamentations, Aunt Janey might go on thinking herself aggrieved, Lucinda Levick saw herself in the distant future mother of an Earl, and was content.

To return to Aunt Janey and Ivy Cottage. The spinster lived alone as a rule (except the two handmaidens who cared for her creature comforts) unless some long-suffering niece or

great niece was on a visit to her. Such was not the case on a certain dull November morning. Miss Haviland had finished her breakfast, and was proceeding to her daily task of reading a sermon, when there came a thundering knock at the door. Aunt Janey dropped the sermon in her amazement. A double knock at the front door at ten in the forenoon, what were people thinking of! It was common, sinful, and worldly to make "calls" at such a time. It was impertinent if anyone, not a caller, presumed to make use of the immaculately bright brass door knocker; in short, Aunt Janey felt aggrieved.

"I can see no one, Rebecca," she informed the cook, putting her head out at the parlour door to intercept that functionary on her way to answer the summons, "no one!"

Albeit very genteel and very religious, Aunt Janey was not above listening. Her cap slightly on one side, she kept her head and the parlour door alike in the best attitude for hearing; and to her indignation this was the answer delivered to Rebecca's polite excuses,—

"Nonsense!"

"No one!" repeated the servant; "the mistress said she could see no one at all."

"I'll take the blame!" And someone stepped past Rebecca, walked through the hall, and, guided by Aunt Janey's cap ribbons, made straight for the parlour. The spinster beheld a tall, well-made young man whom she did not in the least call to remembrance.

"Good morning, Aunt Janey!" began the intruder, as calmly as though he were there in answer to a pressing invitation; "perhaps you're surprised to see me?"

"I should like to know who you are, young man?" was the uncomprising rejoinder; "and what you want disturbing me at this unreasonable hour from my pious duties?"

He looked at the volume of sermons on the ground and at Aunt Janey's stiff, black gown and stiffer face. His father's directions had been, "break it gently to the old lady." But really Harold did not credit that hard, rugged

figure with any feeling that might need to be considered. And being still young, and not much experienced at imparting evil tidings, instead of "breaking" his news he replied, outspokenly,—

"Well, I'm Harold! and I think it's unkind of you to have forgotten me, Aunt Janey, for I remember coming here as a youngster pretty often, and—"

"Not at ten o'clock in the morning," put in Aunt Janey, briskly. "Sister Lucinda may not object to such intrusions, but I have pious duties which I do not like disturbed, and—"

Harold broke in.

"Well, I came to fetch you to a pious duty. I—"

It was his turn to be interrupted.

"You don't look as though you practised any," said his great aunt, frankly. "Thirty of late years I have not seen much of the gay world; but I should say you bear the mark of the beast on your clothing!"

"Hang it!" muttered poor Harold, in despair. "Why will the old lady talk in allegories. I suppose she means I'm too well dressed for a street preacher, and that I haven't the cut of a tract distributor. I'm not going to say I'm sorry!" Then, having retched his feelings by this mental outburst, he rejoined,—

"Uncle Thomas is dying! Father's been sent for, and he told me to bring you down by the next train. We must catch the twelve o'clock train from the junction. You've an hour to pack up."

"But the poor lady was not the strong-hearted creature he imagined, and if she had a soft corner in her memory it was for the brother to whom she had been almost a mother. She fell to sobbing and shaking in such a terrible way that Harold summoned the two maids, directed one to pack up all her mistress would require for a few days' absence, and the other to bring some brandy-and-water. There was none in the house. It had to be sent for; and, therefore, some time elapsed before young Levick's prescription could be applied. But at last, after a vast amount of protests, Aunt Janey swallowed the draught, and then, still in a very nervous state, began to ask questions."

"Where is he?"

"Who?" asked Harold. It must be confessed the young man was having a trying time of it, though he really did his best.

"Your uncle?"

"Oh, Lord Morion! He's at Dieppe." Aunt Janey gasped.

"Then I can't go, Harold, I really can't. I never was out of England in my life, and I couldn't sleep in my bed in a horrid country where all the people eat frogs and hate good honest Protestants."

"They don't," said Harold, with conviction; "frogs are far too expensive to be indulged in so freely, and you need not air your religious opinions if you're afraid of annoying people."

"Be ashamed of my principles—never!"

"Indeed, mum!" said Rebecca, a young woman after Aunt Janey's own heart, who eschewed "followers," delighted in prayer-meetings, and was quite sure of her conversion, "indeed, mum, but you mustn't go rushing off to foreign parts all in a hurry like this! What will Mr. Snooks say?"

Harold hates Rebecca on the spot. I don't know why it is, but young men are very quick at detecting deceit, it seems to me.

"Who is Mr. Snooks?" inquired Mr. Levick. "Has he any right to interfere with my aunt's freedom of action?"

"The greatest right in the world," said Aunt Janey, half hysterically—"the closest!" Harold started.

"Oh! if you're going to marry him that alters the case; and I dare say he'd like to say goodbye to you before you go. There might be time to send to the old gentleman if he doesn't live far off."

"Profane scoffer!" ejaculated Aunt Janey. "The holy man is my pastor."

"Oh! It really sounded like the other thing you know; and though it is rather late in the day for you to be thinking of matrimony it is never too late to mend."

"Mum," said the pious Rebecca, "in my humble belief the young man's an impostor, and he's just pretending he's your neffy till he's got you to h'elope with him, and then he'll have you in his power."

Poor Aunt Janey got crimson. What with the brandy-and-water, the excitement, and all this talk about matrimony, was it not enough to agitate the most exemplary single lady of elderly (we quote Miss Haviland's own term for describing her age) years? Harold felt annoyed. He took a telegraphic form from his pocket, and held it before his aunt.

"Thomas Grey, Villa Fadette, Dieppe—to Merton Levick, Inner Temple."

"Come over at once, Lord Morion is dying. He requests your son will follow with his sister, Sarah Jane Haviland. Lose no time."

Miss Haviland was convinced at last. Rebecca shook her head ominously, and opined it would be the death of her mistress.

"I'll take care of you," said Harold, kindly, for he did feel a pity for the poor lonely woman who had to rush off to the deathbed of a brother she had not seen for years!

"And now face the oah is here, and we had better be off."

It was his first journey with an elderly lady, and when I tell you Aunt Janey took her parrot, one pet dog, three carpet bags, two handboxes, and a bundle of tracts done up in newspapers, I think you will have some pity for the poor young man's feelings.

The train to Newhaven was rather full, and not getting in at the terminus it was impossible to use a silver key to soften the guard's feelings, as there was not a single empty compartment.

Poor Harold had to hand his impedimenta into a carriage already occupied by three pretty girls; and his discomforts when, poor passengers getting in at Croydon, he had to nurse two carpet bags, while his aunt performed the same kind office for the poll-parrot, was extreme.

But all things have an end, and it was a proud moment for Harold when he landed his relation on the deck of the French steamer. He sought out the stewardess, and with a liberal *douceur* prevailed on her to undertake the whole charge of Miss Haviland and suite.

Having seen his encumbrances, even down to the bundle of tracts, which was gradually diminishing in size (as Aunt Janey presented one to everyone she met), safely stored in the ladies' saloon, Harold breathed again.

Leaning over the side of the ship he gazed at the moving water, and, not unnaturally, let his thoughts wander to the change Lord Morion's death must make in his own prospects. He was no hypocrite; he could not pretend regret for the man who had spent the last seventeen years in seeking his own pleasure, and the ten preceding ones in waiting on a sick relation for his money-bags. Thomas Earl of Morion had been separated from his sisters ever since he left college. He was three-and-twenty then—he must be fifty now. It would have been a mockery to pretend to mourn his approaching death.

And that death would change Harold's whole future. His mother died at his birth; his father had never taken a second wife; and so old Mrs. Levick lived with him, governed his household, and brought up his son, to whom, from infancy, she had taught the fact that he must some day be Earl of Morion. Merton Levick, a clever lawyer, had more than once remonstrated with his mother about this.

"It may spoil the lad's whole future if you bring him up to count on dead men's shoes! Lord Morion is not many years my senior; why should he not marry yet?"

"He won't!" declared Lucinda, with conviction. "Of course he's likely to outlive you, Merton," she added, frankly. "The Havilands

all have iron constitutions, and you take after your father, who was a sickly man; but though you may never be Earl of Morion, my bonny Harold will be. I look on the title as surely his as though he had been born Viscount Haviland!"

Merton yielded the point. Very clever in his profession, outside it he had a far weaker will than his mother. He contented himself with insisting on Harold being attired to himself, and limiting the young gentleman's expenses to such as were fitting his present means.

"You can laugh out easily, my lad, when your grandmamma's dreams come true," he told his son. "Meanwhile, we won't go into debt. We shall not be as happy for thinking about the chances of inheriting Morion Grange. For my part, I shouldn't be at all surprised if my uncle married!"

Harold assented, and being fond of his father and really clever, he performed his duties at the office fairly well; but as to not thinking of Morion, that was an impossibility—it was quite beyond him!

Merton Levick was waiting for them with an open carriage and a man servant in private clothes. To the latter, in spite of Aunt Janey's protestations, he confided all her belongings; then leaving Harold to follow on foot, he took his aunt as quickly as possible to the Villa Fadette, a pretty rural home some five miles out of the town.

"Is there no hope?"

It was wonderful how the poor old maid's little eccentricities and follies seemed to have vanished before the presence of a great calamity, she spoke as quietly and sensibly as possible.

"None. He is sinking fast!"

"But what was it?"

"A fall from his horse."

"Poor Tom!"

"He has been talking of you; you were always his favourite sister."

"Always," said Aunt Janey, with a little sigh. "Oh, dear!" as she realized she was parted from her bundle of tracts. "You have taken all the precious counsels I had brought away!"

"He does not want them," said Merton, kindly. A man himself nearly of middle age, he could feel more sympathy for Aunt Janey than Harold had been able to muster. "Poor fellow, there is only one thing he seems to care about!"

"And that?"

"He has a favour to ask you. My dear aunt, don't attempt to argue with him, I implore you. Don't try to make him explain anything. Just say 'yes,' or it may be you will have cause to reproach yourself all your days with having sent your brother out of the world with his last wish ungratified."

Very much impressed, Aunt Janey promised. She was not a cheerful apparition. Her black bonnet was of a very antiquated shape; her long lace veil descended half-way to her waist, and her cork-screw ringlets were kept in position by a little comb. The fact that she eschewed steel and crinolines, had a thick white bon round her neck, and gloves with one button, made her as unlike a modern English lady in toilet as well could be. The French *bonne* who admitted them, stared open-mouthed in surprise, and decided that one half of the eccentricity of those terrible *Anglais* had not been told her. "Heaven save mademoiselle if she had to live among them!"

"Janey!"

It was the voice Aunt Janey remembered, clear and strong, but oh, how altered now! She bent over the bed that she might not miss a word; She forgot she was in a land of "papias," where "every one ate frogs." She forgot even Mr. Snooks and his tracts. Her thoughts had glided back over more than a quarter of a century, and she saw "Tom" in all the glory of his Oxford honours. She had loved him dearly. When he left her to go to Morion Grange, Jane Haviland's heart had



almost broken. And now he was given back to her—dying!

"Oh, my dear!" cried the poor old maid, "my dear, why didn't you send me word sooner?"

It had been the reproach eating at Lord Morion's heart ever since the accident. Why had he kept himself apart from his kindred all these years? Why had he buried himself, first with a great joy, then with a crushing sorrow? He had sought his sister only when he needed her, and now if she failed him and refused his last request, he knew in his heart he could not blame her.

"Jenny!" his voice was feeble, it only reached her ear. "Forgive me! I never forgot you. I meant to write. Promise me you'll be good to her!"

Without a suspicion of his meaning Aunt Janey looked like a creature in a dream. Merton Levick pressed her arm.

"Promise!" he whispered. "Your brother is sinking fast! Don't refuse him!"

"It may seem a burden now," said Lord Morion, with that detestable strength that sometimes comes to the dying for a few moments near the end; "but you'll have your reward. Jenny, promise me!"

"I promise!" said poor Aunt Janey, and she honestly meant it, though she hadn't the faintest idea to what she was pledging herself.

Something the other side of the bed, which in the dim subdued light Miss Haviland had overlooked, seemed to move. What had seemed a mere heap of some dark substance rose up suddenly at a call from the dying man!

"Loveday!"

Aunt Janey saw a tiny slip of a girl, with a tear-stained face, and a wilderness of tangled hair—a little white ghost, with heavy eyes.

"I am here, dad!"

The dying fingers closed on her hand, and put it into Aunt Janey's.

"You'll be good to her—for my sake. Loveday, this is your aunt. She'll take care of you when I am gone!"

That was all. His voice failed, then his head fell suddenly back on the pillow; the life with all its mistakes, its loneliness and grief, was over. Thomas, Earl of Morion, had gone from his inheritance, and Merton Levick felt a thrill of pity at his heart for the two who had received his last words—Aunt Janey and her burden.

## CHAPTER II.

"I don't believe a word of it!"

"My dear mother, it is quite true."

This was more than a week after Harold had disturbed Aunt Janey over the sermon-reading. Lord Morion was sleeping in the Morion churchyard, and poor Merton Levick was endeavouring to explain to his haughty mother how very true the warning he had addressed to her years before had proved, since he was not Morion of Morion Grange, and never could be.

The truth had come out now. In the last year of his uncle's life the heir (he was plain Tom Haviland then) had fallen in love with a penniless orphan and married her secretly, knowing the marriage would infatuate the old lord. Mr. Haviland sent his young wife abroad, and joined her, as soon as he was Earl of Morion.

But those years of thralldom to his uncle's caprices had given Thomas a perfect terror of public opinion and of family discussions. He loved his wife passionately, but he hated the thought of the commotion the news of his marriage would make, so he never published it. One person, and one only, he took into his confidence—the family lawyer, Mr. Grey. Lucy had never known her husband's expectations. Even his true name had been concealed from over-caution. As Mr. and Mrs. Merton they lived in perfect happiness, until six months

after their reunion she died at the birth of her little daughter.

Lawyer Grey then urged Lord Morion to reveal his marriage. The Earl refused. He wanted his child to himself. He would not have her thrown among a lot of people who would perhaps speak lightly of her mother. And as there was no power to change the peer's will, he had his own way. He lived as plain Mr. Morton. Loveday never suspected he was anything grander. They travelled a good deal. She had most things she wished for, only as her father kept her from all society—as she had no feminine friend—the girl grew up as innocent and unsophisticated as a child of ceremonies, of social etiquette. Of fashion Loveday had no idea.

She spoke English and French with equal purity. She could sing little *chansonnets* sweetly, and was a good little housekeeper; but of accomplishments, of flirting, of the manners of the great world, she had no idea. It was only when told that he had but a few days to live that it dawned on Lord Morion the wrong he had done his child. He sent for Mr. Grey and for Merton Levick, whom he remembered as a lad, honest, frank, and clever, and something like a mentor to himself, though four years his junior.

The message, summoning Harold and Miss Haviland, was an after-thought of the lawyer's. He had entreated his client to provide some female guardian for the heiress, and Lord Morion, who despised Mrs. Levick and Mrs. Sherman for their repeated efforts to renew their intercourse with him, had declared it should be Jenny or no one.

While Aunt Janey and her reluctant cavalier were crossing to Dieppe the will was drawn up, and if its provisos were peculiar they but in keeping with the testator's life.

The Morion estates were not entailed. The Earl left them, and their revenues to his daughter, on condition that before she came of age she married one of her cousins.

"I wish it could be you," he told Merton, gravely, "I should feel safe about the child then."

Merton smiled.

"I am twenty years too old. Lord Morion, let me entreat you, do not make this stipulation. No marriage made from interested motives ever yet turned out well. Do change your mind!"

But Lord Morion refused, and the lawyers were forced to let him have his own way. If Loveday refused all the cousins, and was unmarried at the age of twenty-one, she took a thousand a year until she married, beside certain heirlooms afterwards specified. And the rest of the property accumulated till her death, when it went with the title.

If none of her cousins were willing to marry her she took everything her father left unconditionally, and it descended to her heirs after her. But this was an improbable contingency. Yet one more chance was provided for. Should she marry before she came of age, or afterwards, and marry anyone not a cousin, she lost everything except two hundred a year for life, and the property accumulated for the eldest son, or failing the son, a daughter.

"I don't like it!" said Merton to Mr. Gray.

"Whatever has put it into his head?"

Mr. Gray shrugged his shoulders.

"She is terribly plain. I suppose he has gone on the supposition all her kindred are men of honour; and a cousin, even, if he married her for her money, would do his best to make her happy!"

"But even then—why should she marry at all?"

"If she doesn't she has a thousand a year for life—quite enough for a single woman, while she is spared the worry of being courted for what she may leave behind her, as the disposal of the property is not in her hands."

"I don't like it—only two hundred a year if she marry anyone, however worthy, not a cousin!"

"Well, that saves her from fortune-hunters, and provides nobly for her children. I don't

think so badly of the will as you do, Mr. Levick. The part I like least is that about the cousins. She may have a dozen, for both Mrs. Sherman and your esteemed mother had large families, and no limit is placed to age."

Merton laughed gravely.

"Certainly not, since the poor fellow thought me eligible, and I am on the shady side of forty! Still, Mr. Gray, providence has befriended Loveday in one way. Most of the elderly cousins are married already. I am an only son, but I have four single nephews, and there are seven Shermans of different generations, so that would make eleven claimants!"

Mr. Gray threw up his hands.

"It is worse than Shakespeare's 'Portia'!"

"Well, you know, they may not all be willing."

The lawyer growled.

"Fifty thousand a year, heaps of funded property, two estates, and a house in Eaton-square. My dear sir, I'm afraid they'd be more than willing—eager!"

"Well, I know one who would not," said Merton, proudly. "My boy is no fortune-hunter. Harold would far rather work hard for his living than marry a poor, ugly little girl for the sake of riches!"

"Your son! That makes twelve!"

"You may put Harold out of the question," said the lawyer, promptly, "for I am ready to answer for him."

"He may prefer to answer for himself. He will have an advantage over his kinsmen in being the first to make the acquaintance of the Countess-elect."

But Merton Levick was too proud to suffer that. While Lord Morion lay dead, and Loveday was unconscious in her own room, the lawyer had an interview with his heir.

"I shall be detained here some days, Harold. I should like you to get back to town as soon as possible. It won't do for us both to be away."

"But the funeral?"

"There is no necessity for your attending it."

"I am his great nephew!"

"He had plenty of others, but they are not here. I won't have it said you and I boasted of our nearer claims."

"Why, they are nearer, surely! You are Lord Morion, father, and I—"

Merton interrupted him.

"We shall both be plain Mr. Haviland all our days. Your uncle has left a daughter—a mere child, but still Countess of Morion."

"Poor grandmother!"

"Aye, she will feel it. Tell not a word of it till I get home!"

Harold promised. Mr. Gray relieved the task of enlightening Mrs. Levick did not fall on him. He caught the next steamer to Newhaven, and if he gave a few sincere regrets to his lost title, and was honestly disappointed he was not to go through the world as Viscount Haviland, he also felt a great relief he was not bound to escort Aunt Janey, the parrot, dog, and other miscellaneous items safely back to Ivy Cottage.

But all Merton's business was accomplished at last. He had followed the remains of his uncle to the grave, seen Aunt Janey and her "bundles," besides the belongings, restored to the calm of Clapham; and nothing prevented his return to his own house in Bedford-square, and acquainting his mother with her disappointment.

At first Lucinda took refuge in unbelief when Merton had convinced her, a Countess of Morion really existed. She denounced that young person, in no measured terms, as an impostor and deceiver. Merton felt bound to defend poor, childlike Loveday.

"She is only seventeen, and looks less. Not only is she Lord Morion's true and lawful heiress, but so far from imposing, she had not the slightest idea of her honours. I told her, of course, she was Lady Morion of Morion Grange, and strove to explain the provisions of my uncle's will to her, but she stemed in-

capable of taking in anything but the fact that he was dead."

"What are the provisions of Tom's will?"

He was obliged to tell her, she was such a masterful old lady. She was quite capable of getting the information for herself by paying a shilling at Somerset House when Lord Morion's last testament was deposited there. Experience had taught her son what Mrs. Levick would know she discovered.

"I call it preposterous! Fancy leaving the guardianship to Janey! Janey has no idea of management!"

"I confess she struck me as rather unfit for the post," said Merton, amiably, "and she herself does not like the responsibility. She talks of the poor child as 'my burden,' in a way which can hardly be pleasing to her. Of course she will let her marry one of those Shermans. I believe there is one who preaches at street corners, and Janey took a serious fit long ago."

"Loveday is far too young to marry anyone. She is nothing in the world but a doll. Now if you were a sensible man, you would represent Harold's duty to him."

"I think I shall."

The old lady looked delighted.

"You will really tell him he ought to marry her! Merton, have you come to your senses?"

"I shall tell him he is cowardly if he gives up the right of choosing a wife for himself, just to enjoy a rich property."

"I do think sometimes, Merton, you must be a changeling. You have no spirit."

Mr. Levick spoke to his son that very night; he found his task very easy.

"I hate heiresses, and I couldn't bear an ugly wife, father; so cousin Loveday is quite safe from my attentions. I think I would rather not make her acquaintance until she has decided on which of my eleven kinsmen she will bestow herself and her wealth!"

Poor Loveday. She had led such a free, happy life in France. Her father had only lived to make her happy. No one had ever said to her "You must do this," or "You are not to do that." Whatever she had willed to do had been right. Loveday had just been happy. Love and sunshine, freedom and petting, had been her portion from her birth.

And now she was delivered over to the care of an aunt she had hardly seen—a most worthy lady, no doubt—an infallible authority on the matter of sermons or religious duties, but without the least sympathy for youth and youth's enjoyments.

Aunt Janey considered Loveday a great charge, and started with the conviction the girl's training must be all wrong, because she had received it in foreign parts.

Breakfast at half-past eight, religious reading, needlework, dinner at one, walking three till five, tea, more needlework, prayers, bed; such was the programme of life at Ivy Cottage. Other old ladies came to call sometimes.

Miss Haviland at other times conducted her niece to return these calls; there was no variety, no amusement, no pleasure, nothing in the world to divert the poor girl from her sorrows—from the bitter grief at her father's death.

She was known in the household simply as Miss Loveday; she was introduced to friends as "my niece." Aunt Janey could not brook the notoriety that would have been hers had she launched the girl in her pious circle as a real life countess. She tried hard to be kind to Loveday, but they had little in common. Loveday cared for youth, gladness, and sunshine, while Mr. Snooks, tracts, and the parrot were the aunt's dearest objects.

Miss Haviland had an ordeal before her since Loveday was seventeen, and would enjoy her inheritance at once if she married a cousin. It seemed good to the eleven gentlemen whose claims were undisposed of all to evince a great and sudden affection for Aunt Janey, and to show an ardent desire to visit Ivy Cottage.

Their "offerings" were varied and peculiar. One or two, who really knew Miss Haviland

rather intimately, sent selections of tracts neatly enclosed in ornamental boxes; but the uninitiated, who only remembered faintly she was "peculiar," launched out into most eccentric gifts—a ham, hot-house fruit, a silver snuff-box (this gave dire offence), a bible, a superior cribbage-board, &c.

Miss Haviland exhibited them one and all to Loveday, and told her the name of the donor. She saw her niece had a fair share of the eatables, and would gladly have allowed her the first reading of all the tracts, but on this point the girl was firm.

"I don't like them!" she said, flatly, "and I think it very rude of your nephews Aunt Janey, to send you such things."

"Spiritual food, dear!"

"It's not their place to give it you. An old lady like you ought to know a great deal more about such things than they do."

Aunt Janey bridled a little.

"I suppose I am getting elderly," she said, in a quiet tone; "but I never thought anyone would call me old."

Loveday felt penitent, and changed the subject.

"Is it your birthday, Aunt Janey?"

"No, dear! Why?"

"Because they all seem to have sent you something."

"They are all coming to see me soon."

Loveday looked puzzled.

"Do people in England always send presents before they go and see their relations?"

"Oh, dear, no!"

"I'm glad of that. It seems like trying to pay for what they eat and drink."

"My dear child!"

"And when are my cousins coming?"

Miss Haviland sighed. Both Mr. Levick and her brother's own lawyer had told her it was her manifest duty to impart to her charge the wishes of her kinsfolk (the whole eleven had fulfilled Mr. Gray's prophecy, and become suitors for her hand), but Aunt Janey felt it such a very onerous undertaking, she really hardly knew how to set about it.

"I suppose you have read a good many foolish books, Loveday?" she began rather irrelevantly.

"Why no, Aunt Janey. I never read much at home. Dad did, and he told me what he read."

This was not promising.

"Did you ever have any friends of your own age?" said Aunt Janey, trying a new tack.

"Why, yes. There was Marie Desgraves, only three years older than me; but then she married and went to live in Paris."

"And a good many others are just as foolish, Loveday."

"Is it foolish to live in Paris?"

"It is very foolish to be married."

"Why?" demanded Loveday.

Miss Haviland felt embarrassed.

"People should think of more sensible things. However, Loveday, your cousins are coming to see you, and I hope you will manage to like and esteem them. I assure you that is a great deal better than the rubbish people call love."

"But I couldn't marry the eleven!" suggested Loveday, "if I liked and esteemed them ever so."

"You would take the one you liked best."

"Do you mean they are all willing?"

"Yes."

"But they have never seen me?"

"No."

"And they can't know anything about me," here the dark eyes flashed with a sudden fire. "Aunt Janey, what makes them willing to marry me, who am neither clever, nor beautiful, amusing or graceful?"

Aunt Janey looked into the fire.

"Your father wished it."

A light broke on Loveday.

"That nice man who brought us from France told me I should lose a great deal of money unless I did something. He tried to explain, but I was so tired and stupid he

couldn't make me understand, but I see it all now. These gentlemen know that I should bring them lots of money, and so—they are willing to take me."

"Really, Loveday, that is a very strange way of putting it. A young lady should not be so indelicate as to talk so."

"And when are these gentlemen coming?"

Miss Haviland sighed. Loveday had been with her three months, and "pressure" being put on her by the mothers and sisters of the "eleven." She knew she could not hold out much longer; very soon Ivy Cottage must witness what the poor old lady regarded with profound dismay—love-making!

"You see they are all in business, and it would be uncomfortable if they all came at the same time."

"Very!" returned Loveday, drily. "I might get vain if I had eleven proposals all in one day; and you know, Aunt Janey, you would want a big room for the ten to wait in while the one whose turn it was tried his fate."

"Yes," acquiesced Miss Haviland, gravely.

"And we should be thirteen. Mr. Snooks would tell me it savours of Popish superstition, but I should not like to sit down thirteen to dinner."

Loveday smiled. Bitterly as she mourned her father, heart-sick as she felt at the idea of being married for that father's wealth, she had such a keen sense of the ludicrous that Aunt Janey's pet prejudice, cherished so devotedly, in spite of Mr. Snooks, amused her.

"Then what shall you do?"

It seemed Miss Haviland had thought the matter over and made her plans. The eleven were to come from Saturday till Monday in parties of two; at this rate they would all have been introduced to Loveday by Easter. She would then make up her mind which were decidedly distasteful to her, and they would, so to say, be weeded out. The happy remainder were then to visit at Ivy Cottage, by permission, two evenings a week—a name being scratched off the list each time Loveday discovered anything about one of them she did not fancy. The last of the eleven would win the prize.

It sounded remarkably like a game of Loveday's childhood, called "Beggar my neighbour," wherein people start with equal chances, and are gradually elbowed "out" by the more fortunate. The girl listened with profound attention, even consented to receive a paper with the names, ages, and descent of the eleven. There were four who stood to her in the relation of first cousins, the other seven, though far nearer her own age, belonged to a different generation.

"And it is to begin on Saturday?"

"On Saturday, at four," said Aunt Janey, a little briskly. "I have asked Mr. Snooks to drop in, my dear!"

"Whatever for?" demanded Loveday.

"My dear child, a good man's blessing is never to be despised."

"We haven't got to needing that yet," returned the heiress a little defiantly. "Time enough to talk of our wanting a 'blessing' when you have scratched the names off the list."

Left alone that night in her own room Loveday never attempted to go to bed. She sat down and cried until her eyes were red and swollen. She felt heartsick and desolate; but child as she might seem she had a loyal woman's heart, and she had quite made up her mind she would not be set up as a rich matrimonial prize to be angled for by eleven needy cousins.

"Dad never wanted that," she decided, when at last she laid her weary head on the pillow. "He loved me if no one else can, and he would not be angry if I seemed to cross his wishes just to save myself from misery!"

The next day was Saturday, a bright fresh February morning. Loveday awoke more cheerful, and better able to take a hopeful view of her prospects.

The first thing she did was to count her



stock of ready-money. It exceeded her hopes. Mr. Levick had arranged for her to receive a liberal allowance for her private expenses. The quarter had been paid only five weeks before, and it happened she had hardly touched it. Loveday replaced her purse in her pocket and turned to the small looking-glass which, in Aunt Janey's pious fear of encouraging vanity, was only about twelve inches square.

"I know I am not pretty," said the girl to herself, with a half sob. "Dad himself told me that; but I should like to know if I am really ugly—so ugly no one would ever love me just for myself!"

Merton Smith had called her a plain little, brown girl; but that was when she had cried herself half blind with grief, when her hands and face were tanned by exposure to sun and wind. The Loveday of the little village in Normandy was another creature from Aunt Janey's burden.

Not that Loveday was pretty, even now. She called herself "just not hideous," but then she was a stern judge. Many would have thought the oval face, with its delicate wild-rose bloom, the flashing spirited brown eyes, whose velvet depths seemed so unfathomable, and the broad white forehead, framed by masses of dark wavy hair, more attractive than wax doll prettiness, or mere regularity of feature; but there was no one to tell Loveday this. Her verdict on herself was "just not hideous," and that once arrived at she hastened downstairs to breakfast.

Aunt Janey went out shopping directly the meal was over, quite forgetting her sermon-reading. Two strange gentlemen make a great difference to a spinster's housekeeping.

"They will be here at four punctually," she said to Loveday, "and dear Mr. Snooks will help me to receive them. I think, my dear, if you made your appearance at tea-time for the first introduction it would be well!"

"Perhaps!" said Loveday, gravely; "Certainly the hour's waiting would raise their expectations; and, if you asked him, Mr. Snooks might be kind enough to give them a short address on the fallacy of human hopes."

"On domestic duties!" improved her aunt. "That would be a more suitable subject. I shall certainly ask him!"

Loveday, who had listened to one address from Mr. Snooks, and almost fallen asleep over it, decided the two wooers would not be grateful for the pleasure in store for them. She herself was unusually bright and helpful all that day; and when, directly after dinner, she went upstairs to her own room (her aunt hoped to meditate on the awful decision approaching) she kissed Miss Haviland very gently, and asked, in rather a shaky voice,—

"Aunt Janey, aren't you sorry my father left you such a burden?"

The old maid started.

"My dear Loveday!" she rejoined, warmly; "I would have done anything for Tom—anything in the world!"

It was a kind answer, but not the one for which the girl's heart yearned. With such a longing Miss Haviland composed herself for forty winks, and Loveday went on to her own room.

Mr. James Sherman, aged forty, and Mr. Douglas ditto, aged twenty-three, uncle and nephew, were the two cousins whose fate had caused them to be the first of her eleven suitors to lay siege to Loveday's affections.

They were both fine-looking men; and, if neither had got on well in the world—one being a bank clerk at three hundred a-year, and the other a doctor's assistant with less than half—surely that was more the fault of fortune than the sin of the individuals!

To do them justice, neither of them had any claims on them which could make the wooing of the heiress dishonourable. James Sherman had never fallen in love, and never thought of marriage, because he had grand notions, and would not commit matrimony on such a very primitive scale as the only one

which folks with less than six pounds a week for sole income can aspire to.

Douglas was a mere boy in all. Apart from his profession he thought it would be remarkably pleasant to marry fifty thousand a year; but if the wife who was "thrown in" with the fortune were hopelessly deficient or ugly, Master Douglas would promptly have drawn back. He was prudent enough to wish to marry *with* money, but not so base as to sell himself for gold.

These gentlemen renewed their acquaintance with Miss Haviland, whom both called "Aunt Janey!" They were introduced to Mr. Snooks, and tried to look as though they enjoyed that good man's eloquence. But it must be confessed their eyes wandered pretty often to the door, and both were devoured with curiosity to behold Loveday, Countess Morion, in the flesh.

The summons to tea was welcome. Of course she would be there. They filed into the drawing-room, when a note was handed to Miss Haviland. Aunt Janey was methodical; someone might be waiting for an answer; so, with a word of apology to her guests, she tore open the envelope. Imagine her consternation when she read,—

"DEAR AUNT JANEY,—I am sure you will forgive me for absenting myself to-night. The fact is, I think with you that matrimony is a very serious thing, and I am sure I am too young for it. Please tell the cousins I ought to have met to-night I am sorry to disappoint them, and ask the other nine not to trouble to come, for I have quite made up my mind never to marry anyone at all. And when I think people understand I mean what I say, and I feel sure they won't worry me any more about it, I shall come back to Ivy Cottage and become once more,

"AUNT JANEY'S BURDEN."

### CHAPTER III.

TIME in his relentless course had passed on, and now it was more than a year since Mr. Harold Levick had interrupted his Aunt Janey over her volume of sermons, and—this was the most astonishing part of it—Ivy Cottage was shut up, for Miss Sarah Jane Haviland had taken up her abode in Bedford-square, to act as housekeeper to her nephew Merton and his son, *vice* her sister Lucinda, promoted, let us hope, to a better country.

It came about in this wise. Mrs. Levick never got over her disappointment regarding the peerage, which, she declared, should have come to her son directly poor Loveday disappeared.

Merton, with the utmost patience, explained to his mother that the bare fact of a romantic girl's choosing to hide her abode from her relations does not prove her death. He also added that even if Loveday had veritably departed this life, her honours would devolve, not on himself, but his mother.

This was a fatal admission. Mrs. Lucinda declared she would go to Morion Grange, and take possession. She had cards printed with her new title. She ordered an infinity of new clothes; and, in spite of poor Merton's remonstrances, conducted herself in so ridiculous a manner, that had the lawyer not been a *super-excellent* son, he could hardly have felt much regret when a cold, caught in the east winds of May, turned into bronchitis, and forced Mrs. Lucinda Levick, *alias* the Countess of Morion, to resign for ever her position in Bedford square.

The two men she left behind missed her bitterly. She had not been a very lovable character to the world at large, but to them she had been faithful and affectionate, if a little trying, and her death made a strange blank in the old house.

"Harold, my boy, why don't you marry?" demanded his father, when the blinds were up again, and the ordinary routine of every-

day life was renewed. "Your poor mother's little property and your income from the firm make eight hundred a-year, and I would double it to-morrow if I could see any chance of your finding a pretty young wife who would brighten up our home."

Harold shook his head.

"I have not the slightest wish to marry, sir."

Merton looked astonished.

"I married at twenty-one!"

"But you fell in love."

"And can't you?"

Mr. Harold Levick laughed.

"It's a strange thing, sir, I've met a good many nice girls, and enjoyed their society very much, but I never yet saw one I should care to pass my life with. I don't think," said the young man, modestly, "I'm hard to please."

"Then I suppose we must advertise for a housekeeper. We can't go on like this!"

"Invite Aunt Janey!"

"Aunt Janey!" exclaimed his father. "She would fill the house with Mr. Snooks and his brethren; have a fit if we played whist, and spend all her leisure time in hiding tracts where she hoped we should come across them."

"I don't think so," returned Harold, awkwardly; "she's very much altered since Loveday went."

"So she ought to be. If she'd made the girl happy we should never have had this scandal in the family; and it is a scandal, mark you, Harold, that the heiress of our house should be roaming about no one knows where."

"Aunt Janey is very much cut up about it."

"So she ought to be."

"She takes a good deal of blame to herself for not having explained Lord Morion's will to Loveday more carefully. She thinks the poor child ran away for fear of being married by force."

"It was absurd to run away. She had only to say 'No, thank you!' to each of the eleven in turn. The thing would have been done in half-an-hour!"

"And you will invite Aunt Janey here?"

"And Mr. Snooks?"

"She has quarrelled with him!"

"Quarrelled with Snooks! Then I have some hopes of her?"

"He wanted to pray for Loveday publicly as a burning brand, and Aunt Janey was incensed. Then a model cook he recommended her turned out a thief. She has quite 'come out' since that. I was there last night, and discovered her actually learning cribbage!"

"Who was the teacher? Inquire within upon everything?"

"Not exactly—a very pretty girl!"

Mr. Levick looked up.

"Oh!" he said, meaningly, "is that it?"

"No," returned Harold, colouring, for he knew what his father implied. "Certainly not. Mrs. Greville is a charming little lady, but she is a bride of only six months' standing, and a great deal too wrapped up in her husband to look at anyone else."

"Pray, was he at your aunt's too?"

"He was."

"A new edition of Snooks?"

"Oh, dear, no—a soldier, and one who has seen the world. He looks nearer forty than thirty; has the rank of major, but sold out when he lost an arm in the Zulu war. I fancy they are poor enough, but you couldn't think them toadies."

"And you think Aunt Janey would like to come?" inquired Mr. Levick, dexterously.

"She seemed delighted at the idea. Her only difficulty was Ivy Cottage."

"She can't put it on wheels and bring it here. Has she got it on a lease?"

"Freehold! It wasn't that. She thinks some day Loveday will come wandering back in sorrow and repentance and find it shut up. Major Greville offered to take it off her hands at a moderate rent, and his wife promised if

the wanderer arrived to keep her forcibly till my aunt could be sent for."

"Surely she has never been so absurd as to tell those people?"

"She has only told them what the servants and all the people about know, that she had a niece living with her who ran away to avoid being married. That the said niece is an heiress and a Countess to boot she never even hinted."

"Hem! What did they say?"

Harold laughed.

"The Major declared in these days, when most young ladies were wild to wear a wedding-ring, it was rather refreshing to hear of a girl running away from the offer of one. But his wife looked ready to cry, and said it was terrible to think of any girl gently reared being alone in London."

"I don't believe she is in London."

"Where then?"

"Diappe!"

Harold shook his head.

"Gray scoured all the neighbourhood round there. No, depend upon it, father, she is in London or dead!"

"She can't be dead!"

"Poor girl! Perhaps it would be better for her—a poor ugly little thing encumbered with all that money. By the way, Aunt Janey was highly offended when I called Loveday ugly. She contradicted me flat."

"Your aunt is no judge of beauty. It is curious, Harold, that in all the previous contained in her father's will, he never troubled himself to ordain what should be done with his property if his child died."

"I suppose everyone would get a picking of the money, and the estate would come to you?"

"Most likely; but they must prove the child's death first. The Shermans are desperately eager to do so; it makes one heartily ashamed, Harold. The very men who a few months ago were eager to marry the poor girl now only want to make sure of her death that they may enjoy a share of her inheritance."

Harold had his way—a little habit somewhat common with the young man. Aunt Janey came to Bedford-square; and, really, on the strength of her rupture with Mr. Snooks, and her friendship with the Grevvilles, she came out in quite a new character. The tracts were seen no more, the fearful dresses of the fashion of Noah gave place, under Juliet Greville's guidance, to very pretty black satin robes and charming lace caps. The poll-parrot was not (when it had been taught a less religious vocabulary), on the whole, a disagreeable inmate; and, in fact, after six weeks in the land of Sodom (as Mr. Snooks designated Bedford-square and the Levick household) the pious Rebecca and her pastor would never have recognised Aunt Janey. She really had blossomed into quite a genial old lady.

"Ten times better than the old misus"—that was the verdict of the servants. Merton and his son were not quite willing to own even to themselves, that the régime was an improvement; but they felt the relief of it, and no longer suffered qualms as to the receptions their guests would meet with when they gave invitations for a little dinner.

Merton Levick made the acquaintance of the Grevvilles in due course. Aunt Janey detested travelling, and so it was always Juliet who came to see her—not the elder lady who called at Ivy Cottage. When the lawyer had once met Charles Greville and his wife he was always anxious to see more of them; but the couple seemed home-birds. They accepted but few of the invitations given, and, what struck both Harold and his father as a little ungracious, they never asked Aunt Janey or her relations to come to Clapham.

"Juliet knows I hate travelling," said the old lady, mildly, "and it is much nicer for her to come to me."

"There must be a mystery about them,"

was the lawyer's verdict. "Why, Harold, I have more than once hinted I should like to smoke a pipe with Major Greville and he never sees it."

"Perhaps they're poor!"

"They're not rich, but that's not the reason; for he pressed me very much to lunch with him at his club, and I consented."

"Then what is it?"

Merton Levick shrugged his shoulders.

"Can't say!"

But when the long vacation began Merton and his father went abroad. Aunt Janey and a niece (one of the Sherman's) spent two months at the seaside, and the trio did not settle down at Bedford-square till the end of October. One or two letters had been written to Ivy Cottage but no answer had come; and it was only a month after their return to town, when Harold was half-jestingly reminding his aunt it was more than a year since Rebecca assured him of trying to "elope with her," that the poor old lady revealed her anxiety about her favourite.

"Everyone I care for dies," she said, plaintively. "You and your father will be the next, Harold. I am quite prepared for it!"

"Nonsense," said Merton, cheerfully. "We are both in perfect health; and really, Aunt Janey, I did not know you had lost any friends of late years, except of course, Merton and my mother."

Aunt Janey ticked them off on her fingers.

"First Tom, then Loveday, next Lucinda, and now these poor young Grevvilles."

"You're no proof Loveday is dead, and I expect the Grevvilles are flourishing."

"I have heard nothing of them since July," here she nearly relapsed into tears, "four months. Of course they are dead."

"Harold," said Mr. Levick to his son that afternoon as they were leaving the office, "really I have a great mind to run down to Clapham. Of course, Aunt Janey is always a prophet of ill, but really I don't like the Greville's silence. I liked them excessively, but we know nothing of them. They may have ransacked your aunt's house of all the furniture and decamped without our hearing of it."

"Hardly," said Harold, promptly. "The Major is a gentleman; besides, the rent was paid at Michaelmas, but I'll run down if you like? My going will look less important than a formal visit from you. I can take Mrs. Greville a basket of grapes, and tell her the poor aunt is fretting at her silence!"

"I wish you would."

Truth to say, Harold was not at all averse. He thought Juliet Greville the most charming woman he had ever met, and he rather wanted to see her in her own house.

He took a car to Clapham, and reached Ivy Cottage a little before six. The cheerful glow of lamplight reflected through the windows convinced him of one thing—the Grevvilles had certainly not decamped, and no affliction had fallen on them.

"Can I see Mrs. Greville?"

The pretty little parlourmaid answered him in the affirmative. If the gentleman would step into the drawing-room, mistress 'old be down almost directly.

The drawing-room, much altered since Aunt Janey's time, looked charmingly homelike and cosy; but, to Harold's amazement, a young girl was sitting in a low chair by the fire, and the announcement of his name seemed to embarrass her considerably.

"I am so sorry I have disturbed you, but I called to inquire after Mrs. Greville!"

She recovered her self-possession then, the blushes faded, and left only a faint wild-rose bloom on her cheeks. What a lovely little thing! She was just like some little stray princess, with soft brown hair piled high on her head, two star-like eyes, and a throat fair as a lily rising from the soft lace frills which finished off the plain black dress.

"It was very good of you," she said, and her voice was charming—so full of music.

"Aunt will be g'at, I think she has been just a little hurt at Miss Haviland's silence."

Harold stared.

"You can't be Mrs. Greville's niece?"

"I am, though I confess the relationship is only by law. She married my uncle. And you are Miss Haviland's nephew? I have often heard of you."

"And I never had the pleasure of hearing of you. Miss Greville, our aunt, are great friends."

She laughed.

"And great contrasts."

"What! You have seen Aunt Janey?"

The girl flushed.

"I have heard of her. You know she once lived in this house."

"Yes. She has been much perplexed at Mrs. Greville's silence. She declared to-day cheerfully, she thought both the Major and his wife were dead."

"And Uncle Charles said to-day he thought Miss Haviland might have answered his letter."

"I am sure she never had it!"

"You must tell us that; at present she feels considerably injured. She wrote to ask Miss Haviland to be the baby's god-mother."

Harold started.

"The baby! What baby?"

"Why, our baby, of course!" affirmed the young lady. "She is five weeks old to-day, and the loveliest child you ever saw!"

That was the explanation.

Harold made his aunt's peace with Juliet Greville; declared she would be delighted to accept the honours offered her; was introduced to Miss Greville, who condescended not to scream at him; and finally partook of tea with the proud young parents, and then said,—

"Is Miss Greville making a long stay with you?" he asked the Major when they were smoking a weed (what sacrifice, in such a place of sanctity as Ivy Cottage had been a year before!) in the back parlour, which had become a kind of study.

The Major seemed a little embarrassed.

"I hardly know. Juliet and I should like to keep her always; but she is a very independent young lady, and wants to be a governess. She only promised as her company until Juliet was herself again; but we are very fond of the child, and I don't like the thought of losing her."

"She is very beautiful!"

The Major stared.

"You must be dreaming, Mr. Levick. Iris is a good little thing, with a pair of bright eyes, but she is not pretty, much less beautiful."

Harold went home and dreamed of Iris. Aunt Janey drove to Bond-street and purchased a silver mug, which she sent as her offering to Miss Greville, with a regret she could not attend the christening in person, and a warm request that the whole party from Ivy Cottage would come and spend the day.

They came, but without Iris. Juliet said she had a bad headache.

"And in truth, Miss Haviland," said the happy young wife, "perhaps you would not care much to see our Iris. It might sadden you, for she is just the age of the niece you lost."

"Poor Loveday!" And Aunt Janey went very nearly in tears at the thought.

"I hope you will not feel vexed, but we have called our little girl after her. Loveday is an old name in our family."

"I shall never see my Loveday again!"

"Oh, yes, you will," said Juliet Greville, blithely. "Some day, when her eleven suitors are all safely married, your Loveday will come back to be Aunt Janey's burden."

Aunt Janey shook her head. She had pretty well given up all hope of the wanderer's return by this time. The good lady's strong point was not hopefulness, as you have perhaps discovered.



## CHAPTER IV.

SUMMER time again! The roses blooming in the country; the air in London even full of fragrance at the street corners, where girls stood with their baskets of sweet-smelling flowers. Harold Levick, walking leisurely down the Strand, took one of the side streets to Covent Garden, and bought a beautiful bunch of roses, white and red, bordered by cool green ferns.

Harold had left off expressing his aversion to matrimony. The young man had, indeed, acquired a strange habit of frequenting old curiosity shops and buying hideous old china and rare antique furniture such as could be of no use to a bachelor. But though he could and did make progress towards the plashing of a nest, the bird he hoped to bring there was not his yet. And after six months of anxious waiting he was still undecided whether he was ought to her but a stranger, and could not bring himself to risk all, even banishment from her presence, by speaking of his love.

Major Greville and his family were still at Ivy Cottage, and Iris had apparently given up the desires of independence, and settled down as a permanent inmate of their home. The impression she made on Harold grew and strengthened by the time he had seen her three times. He was hopelessly in love.

It ought not to have been hopelessly. He was young, good-looking and agreeable. His income probably doubled Major Greville's, and his father would willingly increase it on his marriage. Any girl whose heart was free might have smiled on Harold, but Iris Greville never gave him the slightest token. His attentions were not disagreeable to her.

Merton Levick soon guessed his boy's secret, and became most anxious to see Iris. Many were the invitations sent for that young lady to come to Bedford-square, but without any appearance of giving offence Iris continued to elude them. She was busy, she had a headache, she and her aunt could not both be spared, etc. There was nothing false in these excuses, only they left the impression the obstacles might have been conquered by a little effort; and that it was will as much as power to come to the Levicks that was lacking on Miss Greville's part.

Poor Harold!

If ever wooing were conducted under difficulties, his was. To begin with, the Grevilles never invited him to Ivy Cottage. They received him with the utmost kindness, but they never said "come again!" He knew perfectly the little family cared nothing for company, and that visitors were rather a *gene* than otherwise. This to a proud young man was trying. Then he was never left alone with Iris—never given the slightest opportunity to talk to her specially. Mrs. Greville mostly bore the chief burden of entertaining him. If Miss Greville required her, the Major took the guest to his smoking room. Harold grew positively angry with the husband and wife for being so blind as to think his visits were to them.

But on this particular June afternoon he was in good spirits. Mrs. Greville, her nurse, and Loveday were spending the day with Aunt Janey. Iris, of course, had been invited, but had alleged the house could not be left to the care of one servant, and the Major was in the country. Harold knew Mrs. Greville would not leave Bedford-square till seven. If he reached Ivy Cottage at five he should have a good two hours with his lady-love before her affectionate guardian returned. He had made up his mind he could bear the suspense no longer. Even if she scorned him, and he was banished from the spot which had become his Eden, Iris Greville should know his secret. He did not feel confident of success; Iris cared nothing for wealth. His hopes were founded chiefly on two things. Although she refused all invitations to his father's she had never deliberately avoided him when he came to

the Cottage, and (this was his great consolation) he was positive he had no rival.

Fortune favoured him. The little maid declared Miss Greville to be at home, and showed him into a little room opening on to the garden where Iris sat at work. She wore a white dress, black ribbons alone marking her mourning. She coloured visibly on seeing her visitor.

"Aunt Juliet and Loveday are at Bedford-square. Didn't you know it?"

"Yes, but I came to see you."

A very awkward pause followed. Then Harold presented his flowers.

"For me?" said the girl sweetly. "How very good of you; but who could have told you it was my birthday?"

"I did not know it, but I am the more glad to have brought them. May I not wish you many happy returns of to-day?"

"I am not sure I wish them for myself," said Iris, simply. "Mr. Levick, when one has made a great mistake, life hardly seems worth having."

Tears trembled in her dark eyes. Harold's heart ached for himself and her. What mistakes could she have made? Was it that she had sent away one who loved her, and now regretted it?

"I am quite sure your life is worth having," he said, gravely.

"Ah, you don't know—" she checked herself abruptly.

"I have guessed one thing—there is a secret in it!"

"Mr. Levick!"

He went on.

"You wouldn't shun society. You wouldn't refuse all invitations, as you do, unless you had some motive. Iris, I must call you so. Won't you trust your secret to me, and let me help you?"

"I could not!"

"I would so gladly share your sorrows, dear," went on the young man, fondly.

"Don't you know I love you, and I would give years of my life just to call you mine!"

She started.

"You love me!"

"Have you not guessed it, Iris? I thought my infatuation was evident enough?"

"I never guessed it!"

"My father divined my wishes weeks ago. It is you have never been willing to meet him; but he would receive you—oh! so gladly—as a daughter. Dear one, if only you would come to me I think we could make you happy!"

"But I don't deserve to be happy!"

"Why not?"

The girl's voice shook.

"When one has done something very wrong and foolish how can one deserve to be happy?"

"I can't believe you have done anything wrong or foolish!"

"But I have!"

"Then you were only a child. Why, you are nothing but a child now! Why should you be punished for any little fault you committed then? Besides, Iris, I can't believe you have committed one."

"I did," said Iris, dreamily. "I was the most ungrateful little creature you ever heard of, and it would only have served me right if I had been homeless and friendless."

"You would never be friendless. Iris, love, I don't see that a childish folly should blight your life. Why should you shut yourself up, and fret just because there is one act in your past you would like altered? That is not repentance!"

Iris looked at him gravely.

"Then you think I need repentance?"

"I don't think so, sweetheart! I can fill up the lines of your story. Someone loved you, and you, not knowing what love meant, promised to marry him. You found out in time your heart was not his, and broke the engagement. I don't call that ingratitude, Iris!"

"What then—fickleness?"

He took it for granted his version of the story was the right one, forgetting she had never said so.

"Of course men think differently. To my mind it was true tenderness to tell the truth than to let the poor fellow go on in a fool's Paradise and become his unloving wife."

Iris trembled.

"I think marriage is very solemn."

"I suppose anything that lasts for life is solemn; but, Iris, don't you think when two people love each other they must be miserable apart?"

"Perhaps!"

"And can't you learn to love me? Iris, answer me, is there anyone else? Do you care for another man?"

"Oh, no!" said Miss Greville, frankly. "I don't think I even know another young man; but, Harold, it is not that."

"What then?"

"I had made up my mind never to marry anyone!"

"Well, my dear child!" said Harold, smiling, "surely you may change your mind?"

"And I told you I wasn't good at all, and that I have done one or two very bad things."

"So have most of us, I fancy. As to being 'good,' Iris, you are good to me, and if you really have got it in your head you need great repentance, wouldn't you marry me first, and repent over the big mistake of your childhood afterwards?"

"You are laughing at me!"

"I am too anxious to laugh. Dear, be frank, what is there between us? Do you hate me, Iris?"

"Oh, no!"

"You like me a little, perhaps?"

She blushed.

"I used to wish—oh! so much—I had known you two years ago!"

"Before you made the absurd promise, the making of which you think you must repent in solitude all your days?"

"Not for that only. Dad was alive then."

"He would have given you to me!"

"I think so!"

"Then, Iris, all you have to do is to put your hand in mine and promise you will be my wife, and if the man who once thought he had a claim to you turns up leave all explanation to me. I can defend my darling against the world!"

"But—"

"Now Iris," began Harold, with a little show of authority, "the matter is settled. I won't hear any more buts."

Miss Greville blushed and nestled a little bit closer to him.

"I didn't want to unsettle it—only there is your father."

"And I have told you, dearest, he will be delighted to welcome you as his daughter."

"He won't be!"

"Yes, he will. He will love you for my sake, till he does so for your own!"

Miss Greville hid her face on Harold's shoulder.

"I shall have to tell you, after all. Harold, promise me one thing. If what I am going to say makes any difference you will tell me?"

"Assuredly. I will take up my hat and fly the house in righteous horror if the revelation is too much for me to bear it."

"You are laughing again!"

But he only kissed her.

"Go on, Iris! I feel equal to anything now."

"Then Mr. Levick will hate me. He told a friend of mine long ago he would never let his son marry a little brown, ugly child!"

"My dear girl! my father never saw you, and he couldn't call you ugly!"

"He did!" said Iris, flatly. "He was very kind to me, and I don't think I was meant to know that. Harold! don't you understand it was at my father's deathbed I saw Mr. Levick, and I am Loveday Haviland?"

If ever man felt amazed Harold Levick felt so then.

"Loveday Haviland!" he gasped, "you can't be!"

But Loveday's head had sunk back on his shoulder, and Loveday's voice sounded in his ear.

"Of course I have been very wicked and ungrateful. I have left poor Aunt Janey in suspense about my fate all these months. Uncle and his wife have told me over and over again how wrong it was."

"Is Major Greville your uncle?" demanded Harold, prepared for anything now.

"He was my mother's brother. I had always had his address, and when I left Aunt Janey I went straight to him and begged him to take care of me till I got a situation."

"And he knew everything!"

"Not everything! He knew Aunt Janey wanted me to marry someone I didn't like; but he didn't know she had eleven nephews all ready to relieve her of her burden."

"Loveday!"

"Don't you see now why we could never ask your father or Aunt Janey here? Why poor little me could never go to Bedford-square!"

"I think you are a witch!"

"And as you disapprove of witchcraft you will renounce me!"

"Dear! What can I do? Don't you know you are a great heiress!"

She clapped her hands.

"Not now. Only if I married one of the eleven!"

"My dear girl! You are an heiress if you marry one of your cousins. And I happen to fill that relationship to you. Oh, Loveday! how little I thought when I refused to become one of the suitors that I should come to wear your chains!"

"You don't wear them. You called me a witch, and you mean to give me up!"

"I can't do that," confessed Harold. "But, Loveday! you're horribly objectionably rich, and, besides, you're a Countess!"

"I shall never be a Countess unless you are an Earl!"

"And what about your repentance?"

"Well," confessed Loveday, "I really have had moments of cruel repentance when I thought of poor Aunt Janey, and how I was deceiving you, and how I had really left myself without a name of my own!"

"I shall tell my father and Aunt Janey that their lost princess is found," said Harold. "How amazed they will be, especially when I add she is to be my wife! Loveday! I think I shall act the Irish landlords, and apply for a police escort!"

"What for?"

"To protect me from the fury of the eleven!"

Aunt Janey and Mr. Levick, Major Greville and his wife, rejoiced in the engagement. As Loveday kept her word and firmly refused to be a Countess in her own right, a petition was made to the proper quarters, and Her Majesty was pleased to grant to Harold letters patent, creating him Earl of Morion on his marriage with the heiress.

And now Morion Grange is a happy home, bright with children's voices. Plenty of guests rally round the Earl and Countess, who are popular alike with rich and poor.

Old Mr. Levick idolizes his daughter-in-law, and you may be sure Aunt Janey (who now confesses to being an old lady) often visits the glad-faced creature. She once called her "burden"; but it is a memorable fact that, though many kinsfolk have from time to time visited at Morion, the threshold of Loveday's home never yet been crossed by a single member of "The Eleven."

[THE END.]

PLEASURE is the flower that fades; remembrance is the lasting perfume.

## "PHIL."

—30:—

SHE had gone from the room to get a wrap for our drive, as I had told her it had turned quite cold; and she had looked back with a smile as she went away. She had a slight flush on her fair, proud face, too; with a deep sweet light in her violet eyes.

She was very calm and cold, this love of mine, Rene Snowden. But I loved her the more for that, in contrast to my own fire and restlessness. I hardly knew how I had won her. So many had tried and failed. She had always been indifferent and disdainful, but she was the one perfect woman in the world for me. No one else had read the pure, unsullied heart; the white, chill nature, that could glow to such warm tenderness beneath love's magic.

I was wandering about the room while I waited; for apparently she could not find a wrap at once. I drummed idly on the piano; I took a few turns up and down the room; and then verifying the old distich about "Satan and idle hands," I did an unpardonable thing—I read an open note lying on Rene's escritoire. I did it mechanically, on my word; and had read it before I realized my own impertinence. I had looked at it idly; a square, heavy sheet of ivory paper, written over with a dashing chirography; but I was brought to the vivid realities of life suddenly enough upon its perusal. It read thus,—

"HAVE I lost you, my Rene? Is all over between us now? And such a little while, since we made our vows to each other! Such a little while, since you were the snow to my fire—such a little while since we parted! And now, this usurper has come between us! How can I forgive you? And yet I must always love you. I will be with you on the fifteenth. Let me have you to myself for a little while; for a little while be all my own, as in the old days. You owe me this much. Your despairing

"PHIL."

I read it twice. I felt blind, dumb, choking. I walked to the door. I heard Rene's silken dress swishing on the stair. I heard her voice call in a tone of alarm: "Felix, what is it?" But I did not turn nor speak, but rushed out of the house.

It must have been an hour or two after, when I awoke to life and the world, and found myself driving madly along the roads outside of the town, with my brain on fire.

That night, I took the night-train, and spent a week rushing frantically from one place to another, never stopping even to sleep at any hotel. All the time I was saying to myself: "How can a woman be so false?" I had been a slave. From the first moment I had met Rene Snowden, I had been bound hand and foot. She was a woman of the world—I was warned: beautiful and dazzling; and played with men's hearts as a child with toys. But I had not believed it. I had thought her "pure womanly." But now I woke from my delusion. What a fool I had been. I had thought—ah! had she not told me, with that flush in her lily face, with that light in her sapphire eyes?—that no other man had kissed the scarlet, tender mouth; that no man had held her in his arms; that only for me had her heart awakened.

Fool! Did they not all say that? Were they not all, every daughter of Eve, faithless and contemptible? Had I wandered about the world all these years, to be beguiled at last by a Delilah, because her face was like a snow-flower, and the sunshine lay in her silken hair? But the proud tenderness—the reserved sweetness—the gracious calm! She had chosen her weapons well. This fair hauteur went farther with a man than all the wild abandon of a less practiced, less artful woman.

At last I came home. Weeks had passed. I was striving to get back into the old ways—

to feel the old interests. But I was succeeding miserably. The morning after my return, as I was sauntering idly along, an elegant little turnout pulled up briskly to the curb, and a light, gay voice greeted me.

"Felix Hawthorne," it said, "are you coming to my party to-morrow night? You have been very rude, for you have not answered my invitation. No one has known anything about you. Where have you been? We have all wondered and conjectured in vain. You look a little under the weather. Is there anything an old friend can do for you?" And a frank hand was extended from the window, and the charming face looked, a little smiling, a little grave, into mine.

"I have been very busy," I said. "Some unexpected complications in business have called me away, and absorbed every moment of my time, for two or three weeks. I throw myself on your mercy, Mrs. Chanfrau, and if you will have such a worthless lounge I will drop in to-morrow night."

"Felix, I don't more than half believe you. You don't look well," was the reply; and as the carriage drove away I saw the pretty, bright face watching me anxiously. "Dear little woman," I said to myself; "how kind you seem. Doubtless you are as bad as the rest of them," I added, cynically, "if one but knew it."

I had not looked at my letters yet, and so had not read her invitation. Yes! I had looked at one. Rene had sent her servant with a little note, the very night "Phil's" letter had wrought such evil in me, and my servant brought it to me at once; but I had returned it unopened, and without a word.

Next night, a little before midnight, I sought Mrs. Chanfrau's house. Everything she did was perfect, in its way; and if society was ever agreeable, it was in her artistic rooms; beneath her smiles it put on its most honeyed look, and rounded off its phrases with an elaborateness that ought to have made one believe in them.

As I made my way to her, she came forward and put her hand on my arm.

"You do look so very grumpy, Felix," she said, "that I must introduce you at once to my new protégé. If anything can brighten you up, it is she. Everyone is in raptures over her. But I warn you: my rose has thorns. Ah! here she is. Miss Everingham—Mr. Hawthorne; Felix, my new friend, Miss Everingham."

I saw a piquant face, like a poppy; dusk and rich; with flashing dark eyes; dark, smooth skin, and crimson lips. She was clad in sombre, barbaric draperies, and looked like some tropical bird, or bad, in her lithe, glowing beauty. I was prepared to be very amiable. But the smile with which she greeted me at first faded away as she caught my name; and she bowed frigidly and turned to her hostess, and away from me. Roselle looked surprised, but rattled on in her lively way. Miss Everingham answered all my remarks with icy monosyllables; and finally, when a blonde and insipid youth came to claim her for a dance, she left me without a word or look, but gave him a brilliant smile of welcome.

By-and-by I found myself in a quadrille, opposite Miss Everingham. She did not notice me. I might as well have been made of wood. It amused me, at last, to watch her studied neglect and scorn of me, her brightness for everyone else. Yet why did she treat me in this way? I had never heard her name in my life before. How, then, could I be guilty in any way towards her? One thing I noticed: Rene was not there. I had expected her, of course, as she and Roselle were dear friends. Once I heard some one say: "A party does not seem natural without Miss Snowden; it is like the play of 'Hamlet,' with Hamlet left out, don't you know?"

"I have not seen her out, even for a drive, for a week or two. I wonder what new whim it is?"

The people had begun to go. I had stepped into the library, seeking Mrs. Chanfrau, to



make my adieux, when I heard a voice I recognised.

"See if you can find my fan, please," it said. "I left it on the window cushions, in the music-room, I think. I will wait for you here."

The next instant, a young man brushed past me meekly, in search of the fan.

Half-hidden in a big chair, I saw Miss Everingham. I went over to her, and she looked up scornfully, and in displeased surprise. But I was determined to know the reason of her conduct.

"When a man is condemned to be hung, Miss Everingham," I said, coolly, "the judge always distinctly states the nature of his crime before administering the sentence. Have you any objections to letting me know what I have done?"

She looked at me a moment very steadily, even contemptuously, I am constrained to say.

"Mr. Hawthorne, when I tell you that I am Rene Snowden's cousin, and dearest friend, you can hardly ask for further information. The fact that no one but I will ever know of your baseness, is the reason that you will still be treated as a gentleman by the world at large."

Before I could reply, the young lady had swept from the room.

I passed a sleepless night. What could she mean? By morning I had reached a conclusion. I called myself weak and poor in spirit; but I would go to Rene. I would, at least, hear what she had to say.

The servant ushered me into the morning-room. It was untenanted. But I heard voices behind the curtains that concealed a little inner sanctuary, that was Rene's boudoir. As I stood, uncertain whether to go further, and cursing the stupidity of the servant who had not announced me, I heard Rene's voice. My heart, in spite of myself, leaped up at the sweet, weary tones.

"Phillys, darling," she was saying. "Papa has consented to go, so we need not be separated."

"I am so glad!" a fervent voice answered, that I recognised also. "But it isn't the old Rene—dear, can't you forget?"

I did not wait to hear Rene's answer. Something within me compelled me to push back the portiere, and I found myself in the presence of Rene and Miss Everingham.

The latter looked up at me, perfectly mutinous. She stepped back with a gesture of aversion, and stood at Rene's side as if to protect her friend.

Rene herself started and turned pale as she saw me, and drew herself up coldly.

"Mr. Hawthorne," she said, icily, "you were unannounced. I suppose you wish to see papa?"

"I wish no one in the world but you, Rene," I cried, the scales seeming suddenly to fall from my eyes. "I have been the most miserable wretch on the face of the earth. I could not live longer without you, and came this morning to hear your extenuation—and tell you mine. I have been an arrant fool, perhaps worse; for I have doubted your truth." She gave another quick start. "But I love you—I have always loved you—I will love you until I die. And I ask you to forgive the wrong I feel I must have done you; for, looking upon you now, in the face of everything, I know you to be high and pure."

Her face had grown whiter and whiter, and her great sweet eyes were looking at me wistfully. Miss Everingham stood by her, but a little in advance, and was facing me with mutinous dark eyes.

Before Rene could speak, her friend broke forth scornfully,—

"You think you can abuse and wrong the tenderest, purest heart that ever beat," she said, "and then come, in your own sweet time, and be forgiven? How dare you? What right have you to be pardoned?"

"Hush, Phil!"

It was Rene's low, even voice that thus broke in upon the other's passionate anger.

A light all at once flashed upon me, at that word "Phil."

"Listen to me, Rene," I cried, breathlessly. "The morning that I waited for you, the last time I was here, I wandered around, and finally committed the unpardonable offence of reading a slip of paper on your desk—a page, filled with despairing and passionate love, signed 'Phil.'"

Miss Everingham started violently, and then stepped towards me with an eager gesture. But I continued, passionately,—

"I had set you up so high in my soul, Rene, that this blow crushed me. The whole world was changed to me, and I believed you false. But I came here this morning, willing to believe you all that I once believed—"

Suddenly a radiant, joyous voice broke in,—

"I am Phil," it cried; "Rene always said I would get myself into trouble with my theatrical notes, in the days when we had sworn eternal maidenhood and fealty to each other. Why don't you speak, Rene? You won't let him go now dear? He has loved you all the time—and what if you had read a note like that, written to Mr. Hawthorne, and signed 'Maud'—would not you have been cruelly hurt?"

But the curtains had fallen behind Miss Phillys Everingham, as she swept into the other room, and Rene and I were alone in the boudoir. Rene was in my arms.

F. D.

THE hardest thing is to keep cheerful under the little stings that come from uncongenial surroundings, the very insignificance of which adds to their power to annoy, because they cannot be wrestled with and overcome, as in the case of larger hurts. Some disagreeable habit in one to whom we may owe respect and duty, and which is a constant irritation to our sense of the fitness of things, may demand of us a greater moral force to keep the spirit serene than an absolute wrong committed against us. In the one case endurance is all that is possible; in the other we may sometimes rightfully fight, and there is a world of comfort in the power of action.

SAXON PEASANT WEDDINGS.—Of the games enacted at some of the Saxon peasant weddings there is one which deserves to be mentioned, affording, as it does, a curious proof of the tenacity of old pagan rights and customs transmitted by verbal tradition from one generation to another. This is the *Rosstanz*, or dance of the horses, evidently founded on an ancient Scandinavian legend to be found in Snorri's "Edda." In this tale the gods Thor and Loki came to a peasant's house in a carriage drawn by two goats or rams, and with the peasant and his family consumed their flesh for supper. The bones were then ordered to be thrown in a heap on the hides of the animals; but one of the peasant's sons had in eating broken open a bone to get at the marrow within, and the next morning when the gods commanded the goats to get up, one of them limped upon the hind leg, because of the broken bone. At first Thor was in a great rage, and threatened to destroy the whole family, but finally allowed himself to be pacified, and accepted the two sons as hostages. In the peasant drama we have now before us the gods Thor and Loki are replaced by a colonel and a lieutenant-colonel, and instead of two goats there are two horses and one goat; also the two sons of the peasants are here designated as Wallachians. Everything is, of course, much distorted and changed, but still all the principal features of the drama, which space forbids us here to enlarge upon, are clearly recognizable. The killing of the goat and its subsequent resurrection, the rage of the colonel, and the transferment of the two Wallachians into his service, being all parts of the performance.

The highest form of beauty is not that of any single feature, nor is it made up of a combination of features, but it is above all things else the outward expression of the inward comeliness of the mind and heart. On the features of men and women the instruments of affection and intellect, of emotion and thought, are intensively and eternally at work.

SMALL DISCOURTESIES.—Even men who pride themselves upon their fine manners frequently violate some small rule of etiquette. Not long ago I was sitting with a friend by her fireside. A gentleman was ushered in who was well known to my friend, but a comparative stranger to me. He shook hands with her first, which was, of course, the right thing to do, and then, while speaking to her, he shook hands with me. The breaker of this law of courtesy was a young professional man, well endowed with this world's goods. I should not record this little rudeness if it was only of rare occurrence, but I often notice people guilty of this discourtesy—namely, that of shaking hands with one person while they are speaking to another person. If you wish to say more than "How do you do?" to your hostess, or to anyone else whom you greet at first, it is less discourteous to continue your conversation with her for a few moments before taking notice of anyone near her, than it is to stretch out your hand and shake that of her neighbour, while your face is turned away and your lips are addressing another person. The discourteous young man to whom I have alluded gave me another reason for my verdict, and as, in this respect also, he is by no means the only offender in general society, I shall mention the little rudeness. There are three, if not more, separate syllables and sounds which some people utter or make when they have not heard what has been said to them, or when they wish to express assent. These are, "What?" "Eh?" "Uh!" and a guttural sound of the letter *m*, which cannot be expressed in writing. "I beg your pardon," or "What did you say?" are sentences which should certainly be said when a repetition is asked for; and "Yes" should not be replaced by a grunt when an assent is given.

A TASTE FOR CHOCOLATE.—The taste for chocolate is rapidly increasing. When Humboldt discovered the use of the cocoa plant in his travels, he little dreamed of the immense business that was to grow out of the concoction of his first cup of chocolate. It is to-day fairly in the way of becoming one of the principal articles of food throughout the world, and tends eventually to supplant tea and coffee as a beverage. As a flavouring it already stands next to vanilla, which heads the list, and it is used in all branches of cookery, pastry, and creams, and for baking purposes generally. "Fifteen years ago," says an American writer, "I went on the road to sell chocolate goods of my own manufacture, and I was laughed at. At that time the consumption was limited in this country to the few large cities in which the foreign element predominated. The article was elsewhere comparatively unknown. The taste for chocolate is an acquired one, and the public had to be educated to the love for it, and, like tobacco and beer, is at first distasteful, and even nauseating; but also, like them, when once the taste is formed, it is not easily surfeited. It probably tires the taste less than any other confection, and this accounts for its presence in nearly all the candy that is sold to-day. Chocolate is one of the most healthful foods known, and in its pure state may be used to an unlimited extent without harmful effects. In Europe it has taken nearly half a century of unremitting labour, on the part of manufacturers, to fairly establish the public taste for chocolate; but Americans take to it rapidly, and in fifteen years have learned to love it, and look upon it almost as a necessary of life. The varieties of chocolate preparations are almost legion, for it enters into the manufacture of both food and drink."

## FACETIE.

MARRYING by proxy is what may be considered a proxy-mate bliss.

The closet in which the family skeleton is kept has shelves for the family jars.

In some things, the lower forms of creation have an advantage over us. The jelly-fish, for instance, never dies hard.

MISTRESS: "Jane, whatever is the matter with your hair?" Servant: "Madam, it's the cavalry regiment; they all wanted a look of my hair before they left."

A CONTENTED LABOURER.—"My good man," said a philanthropist to a street labourer, "do you ever have cause to grumble at your position?" "No, sir," was the answer; "I took my pick at the start."

"EPHRA'IM, does de good book say dat we are made ob de dust?" "Yes, Augustus—yes, sah. And dat we must return to de dust." "Yah! yah! yah! is that so? Well, den, I guess it must be coal dust."

"Look, dear! There's your husband going in to supper with Mrs. Sondamore, a dangerously attractive woman. Let me warn you!" "How good of you! How I wish he was going in to supper with you, dear, instead!"

FRIEND (to young writer): "I see that X, the publisher, has failed, and has been sent to an asylum, hopelessly insane." Young Writer (bitterly): "Just my luck. It was only last week that he accepted a story of mine."

A FASHIONABLE young woman was seen in the street the other day with her hair combed. Much alarm was felt by her friends until it was ascertained that it was only a case of absent-mindedness. The young woman had forgotten to rough it.

YOUNG HOUSEKEEPER (to assistant): "Have you a small hand-bellows for blowing the fire?" Assistant: "Something like that, madam?" Young Housekeeper: "Yes, that will do. If you will fill it with wind and stop it up, I'll take it with me."

TOMMY came home from school and handed to his father the teacher's report of his progress during the month. "This is very unsatisfactory, Tom; you've a very small number of good marks. I'm not at all pleased with it." "I told the teacher you wouldn't be, but he wouldn't alter it."

ALUMNUS (meeting his old professor, after greetings): "I am glad to hear, professor, that you are going to lecture in our town on your favourite old-time topic." Professor: "Yes, yes. But I have divested it of technicalities—in fact, recast it—so that it will reach all persons of very limited acquirements. Hops to see you there."

YOUNG clergyman, only a few months ordained, to member of his congregation: "Well, Mr. Thomas, I see that your son is never at church now. What's wrong? Are my sermons too deep for him?" Mr. Thomas: "No, no, sir—quite the opposite, I can assure you—quite the opposite." The clerical umbrella is turned round, the clerical dog is whistled to, and a felt hat disappears round the corner.

A SUDDEN CHANGE OF VOTE.—They are telling a story of a former Dakota legislator named Wilber F. Steele. Steele is opposed to woman suffrage, while his wife is in favour of it. On one occasion a woman suffrage bill was before the House, and a vote was called for. When the clerk called Steele's name, he arose with the dignity of a Demosthenes, and began: "Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that I cannot support this bill; but—" At that moment a well-dressed woman bent over the gallery rail, and exclaimed, in a loud voice: "W-i-l-b-e-r!" He glanced upward, then turned and said: "Mr. Speaker, I vote aye." The woman was Steele's wife.—*American Paper.*

"A SEAMAN washed overboard!" exclaimed Mrs. Fangle, as she read a newspaper headline; "but perhaps he was so dirty they hadn't enough water on the ship."

## THE VALUE OF MAXIMS:—

"A LITTLE learning is a dangerous thing." So Pope once wrote. The maxim isn't true. A little learning doth much comfort bring To men who long have had no work to do.

SHORT PANTS.—"Why do gentlemen wear short trousers when they play tennis?" asked a young lady of her male companion. "I don't know," he replied. "Why," said she, "to match their breath, which comes in short pants."

WILD FLOUR.—"Johnny, you may give me the name of some wild flower," said the teacher in botany. Johnny thought awhile, and then said: "Well, I reckon Injun meal comes about as near being wild as anything I know of."

ONE of our school-teachers was endeavouring to explain to a small boy in her class the meaning of the word "collision." She said: "Suppose two boys running on the street should come together real hard, what would there be?" "A fight!" responded the little fellow, loudly, and with astonishing promptness.

CARELESS ANGELS.—Little Dot: "I don't like to stay in the house this way. What makes it rain so hard?" Mamma: "So the grass can grow and the flowers come out, dear." "Does the angels send down all this wet just for the grass and flowers?" "I suppose so." "Well, what do they slosh it all over everything for? There isn't any flowers in the streets." "It can't be helped." "I expect they are hired angels, and used to washing windows."

GETTING THERE IN GOOD SHAPE.—"I am much struck, Miss Breezy," remarked a young gentleman, "with the immense 'understanding' since my last visit to your beautiful and enterprising city." "Yes, sir," Miss Breezy replied, "there has been a noticeable improvement of late years in that respect, I think. We are dropping more and more into the refined and elevating customs of the metropolis, and if I do say it myself, Mr. Waldo, we are landing on both feet."

KISSING THE BRIDE.—"I notice," said a clergyman's wife to her husband, "that it is no longer fashionable for the minister to kiss the bride at the wedding ceremony." "Yes," sadly responded the good man, "many of the pleasant features connected with the wedding ceremony have been discarded, and—" "What's that?" demanded his wife, ominously. "I mean—I mean," he stammered, "that the senseless custom of kissing the bride should have been abolished long ago."

NOT READY FOR SEA.—Mr. Carton: "Ah, me boy, I was down at the docks to-day looking at your yacht." Mr. Barton: "Yes? Beauty, ain't she?" Mr. C.: "Beauty! I never saw anything prettier in naval architecture. She's a daisy." Mr. B. (delightedly): "Well, you know, I rather flatter myself she is." Mr. C.: "I notice, too, that she's all ready for sea. Everything ship-shape. Nothing to do but go on board, cast off, and away." Mr. B.: "Ready for sea! What are you talking about?" Mr. C.: "Why, ain't she?" Mr. B.: "Certainly not. There isn't a bottle of liquor nor a cigar on board of her yet."

A CLASSICAL MUSICIAN.—"I'm a poor, broken-down musician, ma'am," said the tramp, as he halted at the cottage door, "and I would take it as a great kindness if you would let me have a little dinner." "A musician, are you? Do you know any of the popular airs?" "Every one of 'em. Name one, and see whether I know it or not." "See-saw," she replied, pointing to a pile of wood and a newly-sharpened saw in the back-yard. "Madam," he said, proudly, as he turned away, "I wish you to understand that I am a classical musician."

## THE SCHOOLMASTER'S COURTSHIP.

"Two negatives makes an affirmative," The teacher said to the maid he wooed. "Now what would you say were you asked to give

This hand to me?" "No, no," she cooed.

A SOLEMN QUESTION.—At a recent church meeting a solemn and most exemplary deacon, submitting a report of the destitute widows and others standing in need of assistance, was asked: "Are you sure, deacon, you have embraced all the widows?" He said "he believed he had done so; but if any had been omitted, the omission could easily be corrected."

NOT STRONG ENOUGH.—In some theatres waiters pass around drinking-water to the audience between the acts. It is a singular fact, however, that quite as many young men still go out between the acts as before the custom was introduced. Apparently water is not strong enough to hold a young man in his seat when the curtain is down. The waiter should put a clove or something that way in the beverage.

"I WANT you," said the millionaire to the artist, "I want you to paint my wife's portrait." "Certainly. If the lady will arrange for the sittings I will place myself at her disposal." "When can you be ready to begin?" "Any time. I will get my canvas ready at once." "Pardon me. You said canvas?" "Yes." "You do not know who I am. I am a man of wealth, and money is no object. I can afford to pay for something better than canvas for my wife's picture, sir."

BOY: "Say, sis, you know Mr. Nicetellow begged your pardon for steppin' on your dress an' tearin' a big hole in it?" Sister: "Well, what of it?" "An' you said it didn't matter a bit, an' you was glad of it?" "Yes." "Because you liked to sew, an' you didn't know what you'd do with yourself if you hadn't anything to mend?" "Well, what of it, I say?" "It wasn't Mr. Nicetellow that stepped on your dress. It was me." "Oh, you horrid, awkward little wretch! I'll skin you alive!"

HAPPY THOUGHT.—Railway Superintendent (biting his lips with vexation): "Here's a friend of mine sent his nephew down from the country, and wants me to find a place for him on the line. The young fellow is raw and gawky, and knows no more about railways than I do about preaching. What shall I do with him?" Chief Clerk (biting the holder of his pen): "I dunno. Ah! I have it." R. S.: "Yes?" C. C.: "Yes. Give him a job as shunter to a luggage train. He will be killed in two weeks, and then you will be rid of him." R. S.: "Happy thought."

HE DID THINK.—"My friend," said a solemn-looking man in clerical attire to a short, puffy, bald-headed, red-faced man in a railway carriage, "I need not speak to a man of your respectable and intelligent appearance of the uncertainties of life, but do you ever think—" "Think!" broke in the little man, "think! Goodness gracious! do I ever think? You bet I think. Why, man, I've got nine grown-up daughters, not one of 'em married yet, and I'm for ever thinking, thinking how to feed and clothe 'em; thinking how to keep away undesirable suitors from 'em without discouraging desirable ones; how the bills are to be met for hats, feathers, gloves, dresses, shoes. Have you got a family?" "No, but—" "Ha! I thought so. Let me tell you, my friend, that when you get a family as large as mine, you'll do some tall thinking, too. See that bald head of mine?" "Yes; but, my dear sir, I—" "Well, that comes from thinking. When you have a family as numerous as mine your head will be as bald as an ostrich's egg, and don't you for—" "But the clerical-looking man, with an expression of disgust on his face, had arisen, and was rapidly making his way to the other end of the carriage."



## SOCIETY.

THERE will be a Thanksgiving Service, in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Her Majesty's accession, at St. Paul's Cathedral, on Thursday, June 23, at 4 p.m. The Dettingen "Te Deum" will be included in the service, with an orchestral accompaniment. The Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs, and Corporation will attend in state. The choir and portion of the dome will be reserved for the corporation. The nave and the rest of the dome will be open to the public.

From Spanish Court etiquette is being gradually infringed by the Queen Regent. When the ministers recently went to Aranjuez to hold council with the Queen, they found her Majesty driving herself in the park, and she insisted on the chief Ministers getting into her carriage, which she drove back to the palace. After the council, Queen Christina kept the Ministers to breakfast, and at the close of the meal ordered cigars to be brought in, somewhat to Ministerial dismay, as smoking in the presence of a Spanish Queen had never before been allowed.

THE Duchess of Teck visited Richmond for the purpose of opening the Princess Mary Adelaide's Training Home for Servants, which has been established on Richmond Green. Her Royal Highness was received by the members of the committee and a large and distinguished company.

The home, which is in connection with the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, was originally started at Ivy House, Marshgate, Richmond, but so important has the work become under the presidency of the Duchess of Teck that the above premises have been found quite insufficient, both in size and convenience, and have necessitated removal to a larger building on Richmond Green, which has been generously placed at the disposal of the committee by the Hon. Algernon Tollemache, who, during the past year or two, has assisted various local charities by special gifts amounting to several thousands of pounds.

THE eighth anniversary of the death of the Prince Imperial, who was killed while fighting with the British troops in Zululand, was celebrated with due solemnity at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Chislehurst. A large congregation assembled at an early hour. The Empress Eugénie, owing to an unexpected delay in the arrival of the boat from Naples, was not able to be present, and the Imperial family were represented by Prince Lucien Bonaparte, General and Lady Evelyn Wood, Captain Blade and Mrs. Blade, and M. Uhlmann, valet of the deceased Prince, who brought the body to England, also assisted at the service.

The Queen sent a wreath of gardenias and other choice flowers to be placed on the coffin of the late Prince. Many other wreaths were also placed on the coffin by friends and followers. The Empress Eugénie, travelling as the Countess de Pierrefonds, arrived at Plymouth shortly before three o'clock the next morning in the Orient line steamship *Garonne*, from Naples. Her Majesty has been residing for nearly six months at the villa Delaharte. She is in improved health.

HER MAJESTY has sent an Indian shawl to Lady Castlerosse as a wedding present. A letter from Sir Henry Ponsonby, which accompanied the gift, expressed Her Majesty's regret that owing to her absence abroad, the shawl was not sent at the proper time.

A LARGE and fashionable congregation assembled in St. Paul's Church, Knightsbridge, on the occasion of the marriage of Mr. Richard Russell, son of the late Mr. R. Russell, of Wilmington Hall, Kent, with Lina Mary, eldest daughter of Lina Lady Scott, of The Hurst, Walton-on-Thames, and of the late Sir Claude Scott, Bart.

## STATISTICS.

THIRTY Paris theatres have been burnt down within the last one hundred and twenty-four years, but the united loss of life in these disasters does not reach the total of those sacrificed the other day at the Opéra Comique. The first of these fires occurred at the Opéra in 1763, when the building caught fire one morning, happily not during any performance. Two people were killed. Eighteen years later the Opéra—entirely rebuilt—was burnt down during the performance of *Orphée*, but as the fire broke out at the end of the evening, and the head-dancer had the presence of mind to abruptly close the scene, and bring down the curtain, the spectators escaped safely though at least nineteen of the Opéra company lost their lives. Passing over less serious fires, the Cirque du Palais Royal was destroyed in 1798, and the Odéon in 1798, and 1818, each time with loss of life, the Ambigu in 1827, the Gaieté in 1835. The hapless Opéra Comique house—then called the Italiens—was burnt down in 1838, and the Vaudeville followed six months later. The Commune destroyed three theatres, and the burning of the old Opéra in 1873 is still fresh in most Parisian memories. So great was the reaction against theatre-going in Paris after the recent tragedy, that next night the theatrical receipts went down over a third.

## GEMS.

HE is young enough who has health, and he is rich enough who has no debts.

FORBIDDEN pleasures do not yield a moiety of the gratification that comes from those that are lawful and permissible.

THE wise and active conquer difficulties, by daring to attempt them; sloth and folly shiver and shrink at sight of toil and hazard, and make the impossibility they fear.

A GOOD man is the best friend, and therefore is first to be chosen, longest to be retained, and, indeed, never to be parted with, unless he ceases to be that for which he was chosen.

THE spirit of conciliation puts peace, love, and harmony far above trifles; it buries petty selfishness, it inflicts no unnecessary wounds, it lends a courtesy and grace to actions, a charm to presence, a dignity to character, and a never-failing spring of happiness to life.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**CREAMY SAUCE.**—Cream one-half cup butter, add slowly one-half cup powdered sugar, one-quarter cup cream, juice and grated rind of one lemon.

**MUFFINS.**—Cream together one cupful of butter and one cupful of sugar; add three eggs and one pint of milk, stirring well; then add one quart of wheat flour, with two teaspoonfuls of baking-powder and one cupful of yellow Indian meal. Bake in muffin-rings in a hot oven.

**BOILED ICING.**—One and one-fourth pounds of loaf sugar, added to one teacup of water and boiled to a thick syrup. Then strain it through thin muslin, and while hot stir into it the whites of three eggs beaten stiff. Then beat in the strained juice of a lemon, and season with a little oil of lemon. If too thin, add a little sugar; if too stiff, add a little more white of egg.

**CABINET PUDDING.**—Butter a mould, and decorate with raisins. Fill the mould with alternate layers of sponge cake, raisins and macaroni. Fill with an uncooked custard made with one pint milk, yolks of four eggs, four tablespoonfuls sugar, one saltspoonful salt, and teaspoonful vanilla. Steam slowly two hours. Serve with sauce.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE silent pressure of the hand is often of more vital good than a whole volume of good counsel; and one tear, one kiss, one bright, encouraging smile, can help the broken heart, the sinking spirit, where words of advice would fall unheeded, or be an aggravation to present pain.

IT is impossible that the man should retain the fresh unconsciousness of the child. Yet, as long journeys bring us back to the home, to appreciate its blessings the better for our increased knowledge of other places, so years wisely lived often bring us back to estimate more fully and value more highly the simple sincerity and guilelessness of childhood. Indeed the most perfect manhood is that which loses none of the virtues of any age, but gathers them as life goes on, and infuses into them all new meaning and power with every gain of wisdom and of strength.

**GARIBALDI'S PATIENCE.**—It is related of Garibaldi that as he was going home one night he met a Sardinian shepherd lamenting the loss of a lamb out of his flock. Garibaldi at once turned to his staff and announced his intention of scouring the mountain in search of the lamb. A great expedition was immediately organized. Lanterns were brought, and old officers of many a campaign started off, full of zeal, to hunt the fugitive; but no lamb was found, and the soldiers were ordered to their beds. The next morning Garibaldi's attendant found him in bed fast asleep. He was surprised at this, for the general was always up before anybody else. The attendant went off softly and returned in half an hour. Garibaldi still slept. After another delay the attendant waked him. The general rubbed his eyes, and so did the attendant, when he saw the old warrior take from under the covering the lost lamb, and bid him convey it to the shepherd. The general had kept up the search through the night until he found it.

**THE HONEY BEE.**—All the wants of the queen bee in the way of nourishment are supplied by her subjects. She mates once in her life, when she is a few days old, with a single drone, and on the wing. That is the only occasion of her leaving the hive, except when she leads forth a swarm. Her grand function is to lay eggs, and every part of her structure and every power she has is more or less related to this all-important duty. She is as we have implied, freed from every other office. The hatching, the tending, the rearing, the instruction of her progeny, are entirely taken out of her hands, and it is doubtful whether she has any affection for her children. She is constantly attended by a retinue of ten or twelve "maids of honour," who all keep their heads turned towards her, clear the way for her, prevent all crowding round her, and supply her with the most nutritious food, previously half-digested by themselves. They caress her with their antennæ and seem to find a real joy in mere proximity to their monarch. Should she, by more rapid movements than usual, outstrip her retiring attendants, the bees with whom she thus unexpectedly comes in contact appear excited and alarmed, and move hastily from her path. So long as she remains sound and well in the hive, all the varied works go on peacefully and incessantly. Should she die or be removed, immediate consternation is manifested. Her subjects rush about in excitement and distress. They buzz around the neighbourhood of the hive, but all active and productive work ceases. They know that unless the disastrous loss can be repaired, their community must perish for lack of new progeny, and when despair seizes them, they seem to act upon the motto, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. E. B.—Nothing but persistent use of the tweezers.

A. LOVER OF THE COUNTRY.—Respectfully declined.

C. R. P.—The "true name" is requisite.

M. M.—No.

G. H. B.—Steel rails were first rolled in England in 1857.

F. F. D.—It is not our practice to give such an address as you request.

LOTTIE.—Consult a physician who can give you his personal attention.

M. C. S.—Unable to say, so much depends upon the texture of the article.

JESSIE.—You had better leave the place and get a situation in another town.

R. A. A.—The agreement must be stamped within fourteen days of its execution.

R. G. N.—We advise you to consult a regular physician in preference to the remedies referred to.

E. G. H.—As we have said to other correspondents, we know of no remedy for chronic redness of the nose.

G. S.—India rubber will dissolve or melt in gas-tar oil, turpentine, ether, chloroform, naphtha, and petroleum.

T. A. G.—A lady with dark-brown eyes, light-brown hair, and fair complexion would be classed as a demi or half-blonde.

LILY.—To brighten Britannia ware, first clean it with a woolen cloth and sweet oil, then in water and soda, and rub with soft leather and whiting.

P. B. C.—The cradle of the human race is not known. The majority of ethnologists, however, regard the southern part of Asia as the birthplace of man.

LOIS LADY.—The trailing arbutus is so called from its trailing lowly habit. It is also called Mayflower, from the season of its blossoming. Another name for it is ground laurel.

G. L.—To get rid of cockroaches, prepare a mixture of red lead, Indian meal, and treacle in a thick batter, and place it at night near their haunts. Be careful of its use, for it is poisonous.

C. S.—The only legitimate way in which you can become acquainted with the young lady, even though you meet her every day while going to your office, is through an introduction by a mutual friend.

R. D.—We have not the space to spare for a full description of the process, but if the object be to get at the mode of blending and compounding the article, a work on the subject will enlighten you.

R. H. C.—Your penmanship may be greatly improved in appearance by the use of a better quality of paper, and more care and time devoted to its performance, as the specimen sent shows that neither has been employed.

C. W. S.—Mese is a seaport town of France, 10 miles south-west of Montpellier. Population at the last census 6,501. Its harbour accommodates vessels under 60 tons burden. It has an important trade in wine, and also salt works and distilleries.

E. R. T.—The German Army, on the peace footing, consists of 21,238 officers and 438,104 men, with 81,593 horses, and 1,374 guns. The French Army, on the peace footing, consists of 19,057 officers, and 514,149 men, with corresponding horses and guns.

M. S.—When one starts out with the determination to conquer difficulties, he or she should not mind the chaffing of shallow-pated persons who say that the student is too old to learn. Keep ever before your eyes the motto, "It is never too late to learn."

BERTIE.—There is no harm done in kissing your promised husband, but at the same time you may surfeit him with too much labial sweetness. Consequently, it would be better to be a little circumspect, and let him understand that such favours cannot be obtained for the mere asking.

G. C. C.—The pilot fish is so called because held sacred by the ancients, from the belief that it led vessels in their proper course, and through dangerous passages. It is found in the Mediterranean Sea and in the Atlantic Ocean on the coasts of America. It is about a foot long. It is noted for following vessels long distances for the sake of the food thrown overboard.

E. G. O.—Eggs may be preserved by dipping them in melted suet, olive oil, milk of lime, solution of gum-arabic, or covering them with any air-proof varnish. Afterwards pack them in bran, oats, meal, salt, ashes, or charcoal powder. It is thought that two coatings of collodion or one of paraffine would preserve eggs as well, if not better, than any of the methods suggested. The chief object is to seal up the pores of the shell.

BESSIE.—An admirable eye-water for weak eyes is thus made: Take half an ounce of salt and the same quantity of dry sulphate of zinc; simmer in a perfectly clean covered porcelain vessel with three pints of water until all are dissolved; strain through thick muslin, and add one ounce of rose-water; bottle and cork. To use it, mix two teaspoonfuls of water with one of the eye-water, and bathe the eyes night and morning. If the eyes be very weak, bathe them oftener. If the wash makes you smart, add more water. Apply with a little soft white rag. Ordinarily simple salt and water will answer.

K. E.—Thursday, February 8, 1872.

A. B.—Only an experienced lawyer can advise you upon the subject.

M. C. P.—Be governed by the advice of your parents. You are too young to act upon your own responsibility.

J. M. L.—Doubtless you are possessed of a bright, sunny disposition, if penmanship can be taken as an indication of character.

EDDIE.—1. Dark auburn hair. 2. A lady having locks of that colour, a very fair complexion and light blue eyes, would be called a demi-blonde.

SURPRISED.—The publication of which you speak has been out of print for several years, and consequently we are unable to say where back volumes of it can be obtained.

BESSIE.—A dark-brown lock of hair which doubtless sets off your style of beauty—that known as the demi or half-blonde. You are far above the average in weight and height.

HETTIE R.—Henrietta is the feminine form of Henry. The signification of the male title is rich at home. Hettie is a diminutive form of Henrietta. Remarkably neat penmanship.

B. D. L.—Your penmanship is too laboured for copying, which needs quickness and neatness in all cases. Still, by persistent practice it may, in the course of four or five months, be greatly improved.

JOSEPHINE.—The verses intended for the youngster's album are very appropriate, and reflect great credit upon the authors. As no address accompanied the lines, it is natural to suppose that you have retained a copy of them.

## THE AWAKENING.

Reluctant, and with many a backward glance,  
King Winter turned to go,  
 Ofttimes returning with a dim d wall,  
 While Spring, affrighted, hushed her early song,  
 But kept her unseen forces all at work.  
 Then, step by step, the tyrant loses ground;  
 The chains of ice that held the streamlets fast  
 Are riven, and the captive wonders free.  
 The snowy mantle wove by frosty air  
 Becomes the nectar of the waking earth.

So winter passes on, and following in his steps  
 Young Spring appears.  
 Something of Winter lingered in her smile  
 For many a day. A gentle chill, as 'twere,  
 To ease the bound from cold to genial warmth.  
 Anon the sun poured down with generous hand  
 Whole floods of heat and light.  
 Through all the fibres of the leafless trees  
 Life, quivering, crept with slow, uncertain steps.

At length the pitying clouds open wide their doors,  
 And showered their wealth as freely  
 As the sun his warmth and light.  
 The gentle rain unloosed the swelling buds,  
 And with a bound, the foliage rushed out.  
 Flowers sprang to blossom, and the humble grass  
 Put on a richer hue than was its wont.  
 And Spring in youthful beauty clothed and crowned,  
 Ascends her throne, the queen of all the year.

L. C.

P. R. M.—There are two distinct varieties of the breed of dog known as retrievers—the flat, or wavy-coated, and curly-haired, the former being generally considered the handsomest. In appearance they somewhat resemble a Newfoundland, but are considerably smaller.

G. A. R.—On account of the injurious effect produced by the use of hair-bleaching compounds, all of which are composed of highly poisonous ingredients, we prefer to decline publishing any recipes for such mixtures. Ammonia will cleanse the scalp if a very small quantity is placed in the water used for washing it.

CHEMISTRY.—Chemists sell a cosmetic mixture for darkening the eyebrows which, being composed of non-poisonous ingredients, can exercise no harmful effect on the persons using it. Still we cannot imagine why a pretty woman should attempt to improve on nature, even though her eyebrows are shade or two lighter in colour than her hair. The colour of the lashes cannot be improved, as dyeing them would prove both injurious and useless.

G. H. W.—The pine snake is a serpent which lives in the pine lands from New Jersey (U.S.A.) southward. Though large, sometimes attaining a length of six feet and a thickness of two inches, it is harmless. Its colour is shining creamy white, with dark brown and chestnut blotches. It is called bull snake by some, because it makes a loud bellowing sound. Birds and eggs are its favourite food. It is considered the handsomest of the eastern snakes. It emits a strong, disagreeable odour.

L. D. H.—1. Perpetual motion, in mechanics, is a machine which when set in motion would continue to move without the aid of external force and without the loss of momentum, until its parts became deranged or worn out. The impossibility of producing such a machine has for years been apparent to all who know anything about mechanics. It can only become possible when a body once set in motion shall meet with no resistance, which is an impossible condition. In a word, as before said, a mechanical perpetual motion is clearly an absurdity. 2. We know of no recent reward for its discovery.

LENA.—1. You can do nothing at all satisfactory. 2. The hair is seal-brown.

E. R. G.—The lovely dark auburn hair, brown eyes and fair complexion, proclaim that you are but slightly removed from the style of beauty known as brunet.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER.—Write to the Secretary of the Foundling Hospital, Guilford-street, Russell-square, London, enclosing a stamped-addressed envelope, and you will doubtless receive an answer giving full particulars.

I. G.—A lady after accepting a gentleman as her escort to an evening party would display a remarkable ignorance of good breeding were she to allow another to take her home after its conclusion. The slighted gentleman would be fully justified in resenting this insult by cutting her acquaintance for ever.

D. C.—To bleach straw bonnets, get a deep box, airtight, if possible, and place at the bottom a stone, on the stone a flat piece of iron red hot, or a pan of charcoal, on which scatter powdered brimstone; close the lid, and let the bonnets remain one night. There should be hooks in the box, on which to hang the bonnets.

LITA.—"Crushed tragedians" are as plentiful as flowers in summer, and therefore you can rest assured that you are not alone in your disappointment. Unless endowed with the "heavenly fire," it would be useless to attempt to adopt the stage as a profession, as nothing but disappointment awaits those who lack such inspiration.

LIDIE.—1. One cannot doubt the existence of such a thing as love at first sight, but such love alone is a very uncertain foundation upon which to base marriage. A thorough acquaintance, and a certain knowledge of harmony of tastes and temperaments, is absolute necessary to a happy matrimonial career. Neither of these can be obtained in the course of a few days or weeks. 2. About the average of penmanship; spelling miserable.

C. N. J.—It is believed that marshes, whether salt or fresh, and wet meadows are especially subject to malaria, particularly when drying under a hot sun. The ploughing up of meadowlands, and the process of clearing a new country of its woods, thus exposing the soil to the full action of the sun, are generally followed by the prevalence of fevers. A marsh covered with water is innocuous; but when the moisture dries up under the influence of the sun it becomes pestilential. In malarious localities exposure to the night air should be avoided.

M. M. R.—Although you have attained the age of twenty-two, it does not naturally follow that you are capable of providing a home for a wife, as, having no trade or profession, you have failed to accumulate any money, and could not conscientiously take such a momentous step in life. First prepare for yourself for it, and then there will be none of the pretty wranglings that so often occur when the head of the house is unable to furnish the wherewithal to keep the wolf from the door.

LEONHARD.—Electroplating, or coating with silver, is conducted in a similar manner to electrotyping as far as general principles and manipulation are concerned, but differs in the solutions used, as well as in the preparation of the objects to be electroplated. No substantial idea of the various operations required could be gained by a mere description of it in this place. Those engaged in the business have served a long apprenticeship, and consequently if one wishes to learn how it is accomplished he must go and do likewise. In making the various solutions required, chemicals of a highly poisonous nature are employed, and consequently it would be foolhardy for an amateur to jeopardize his life in handling such articles unless thoroughly acquainted with the proper manner of doing so.

GEORGE.—1. A beautiful sentiment is embodied in the following lines; and on that account they will prove a very appropriate addition to your lady-love's album:

I pray the prayer of Plato old:  
 God make thee beautiful within,  
 And let thine eye the good behold  
 In everything we see in.

May your days in joy be passed  
 With your friends to bless and cheer,  
 And each year exceed the last  
 In all that earth holds dear.

2. It would be useless for us to attempt to criticise such elegant penmanship.

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